

VOGUE

MAR

A close-up, profile photograph of a woman with voluminous, curly brown hair. She is wearing a light-colored, textured jacket with a fur-trimmed hood. The lighting is warm and golden, suggesting sunset or sunrise. Her eyes are closed, and she has a contemplative expression.

UNFINISHED
BUSINESS
FASHION EMBRACES
THE CHIC OF
IMPERFECTION

JODIE
COMER
HOLDS COURT
ON BROADWAY

TOMORROWLAND
HOW SEOUL
BECAME STYLE'S
NEW FRONTIER

ERYKAH BADU
RADICAL, RELEVANT, REAL





LOUIS VUITTON

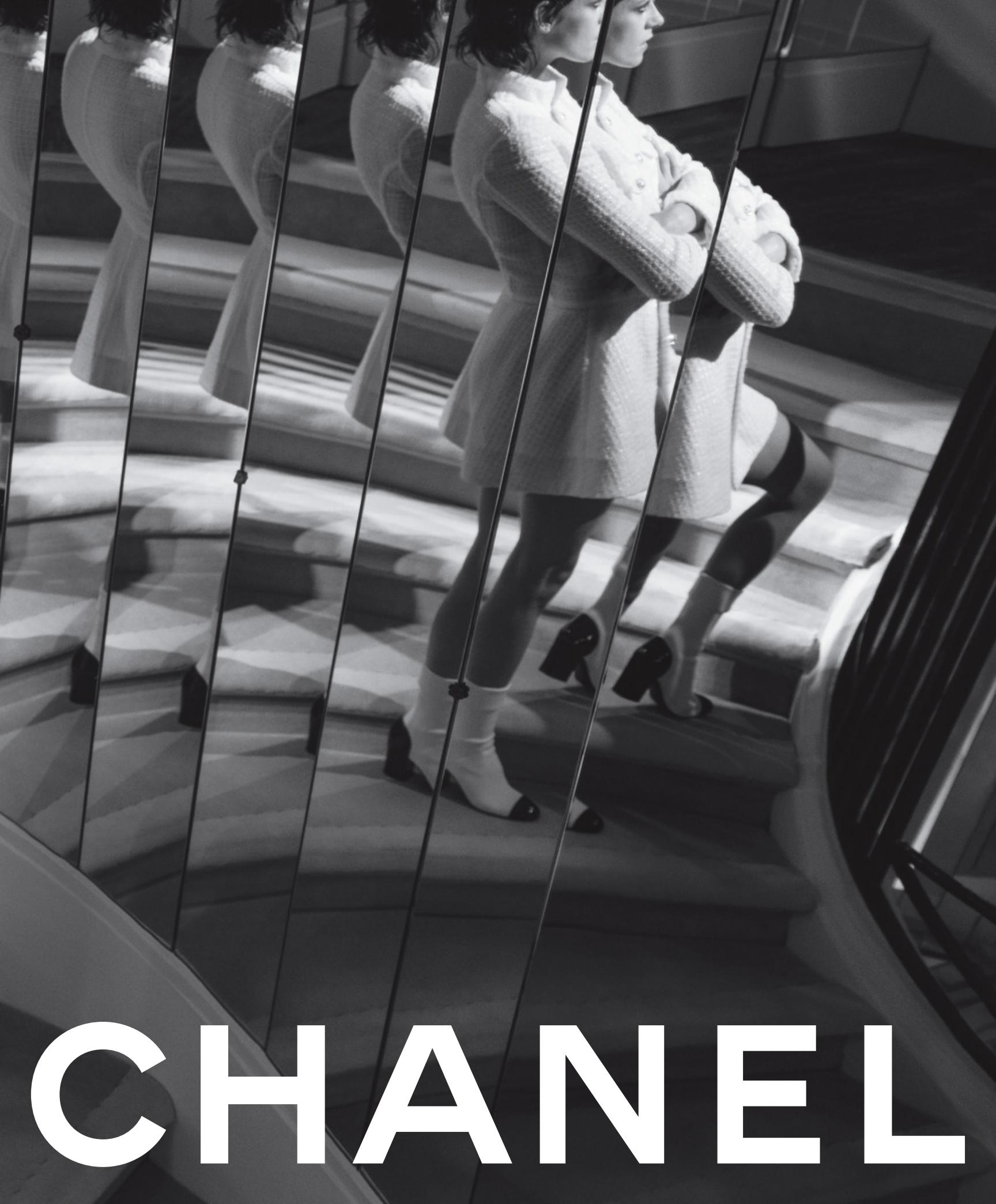












CHANEL

A photograph of a beach at dusk or dawn. The sky is a soft, hazy blue and orange. In the distance, a small sailboat with its mast up is visible on the calm sea. The foreground is a sandy beach with some scattered debris and small rocks. Overlaid across the bottom half of the image is the word "CHANEL" in a large, bold, white sans-serif font.

CHANEL





A photograph of a woman with long dark hair and bangs, smiling and looking over her shoulder. She is wearing a sleeveless, sequined vest over a dark top and high-waisted, light-wash denim jeans. A black shoulder bag with a snakeskin pattern and a tan leather strap hangs from her left shoulder. She is standing next to another person whose back is to the camera, wearing a grey herringbone blazer. The background is dark and appears to be an indoor event or party.

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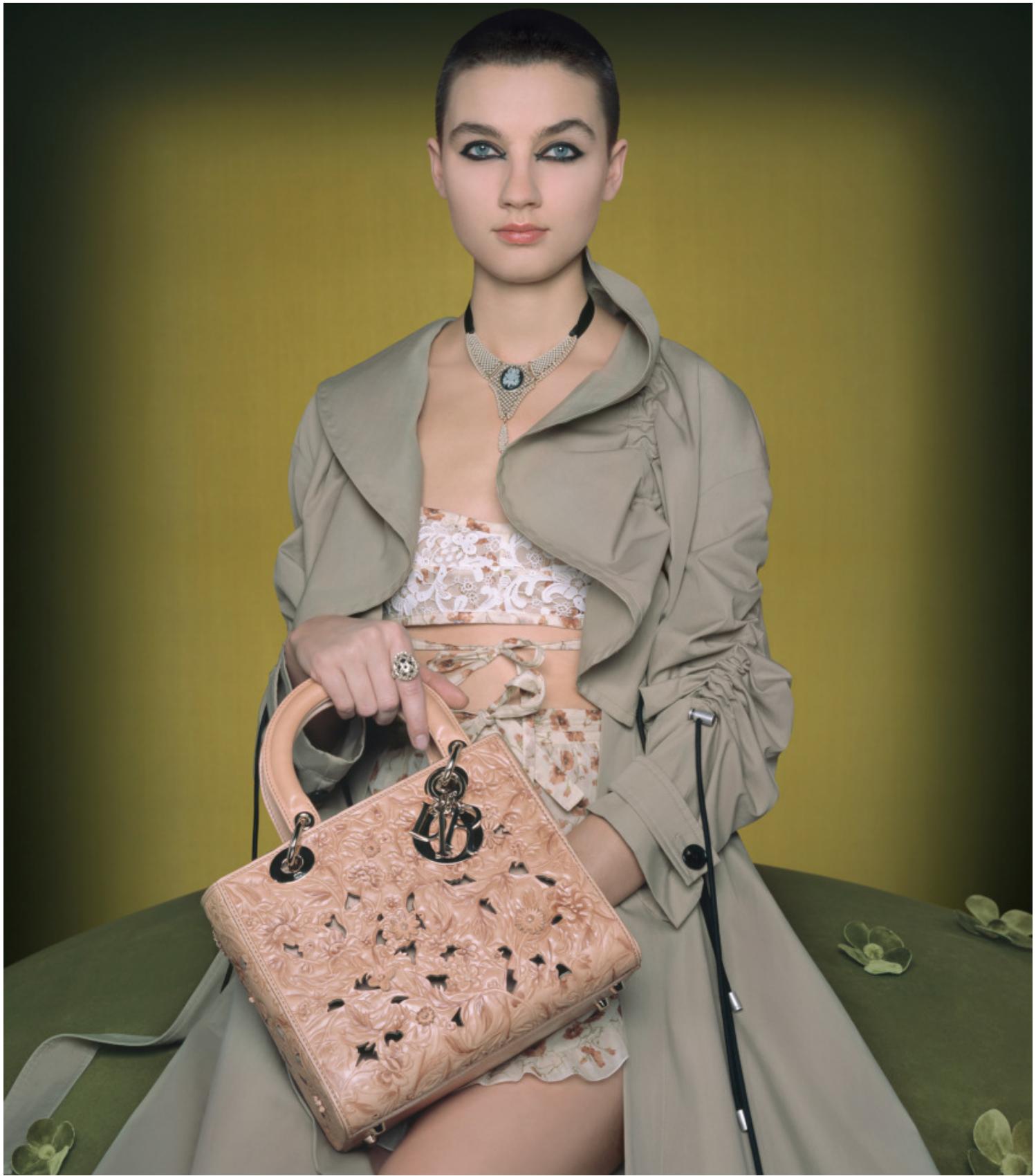


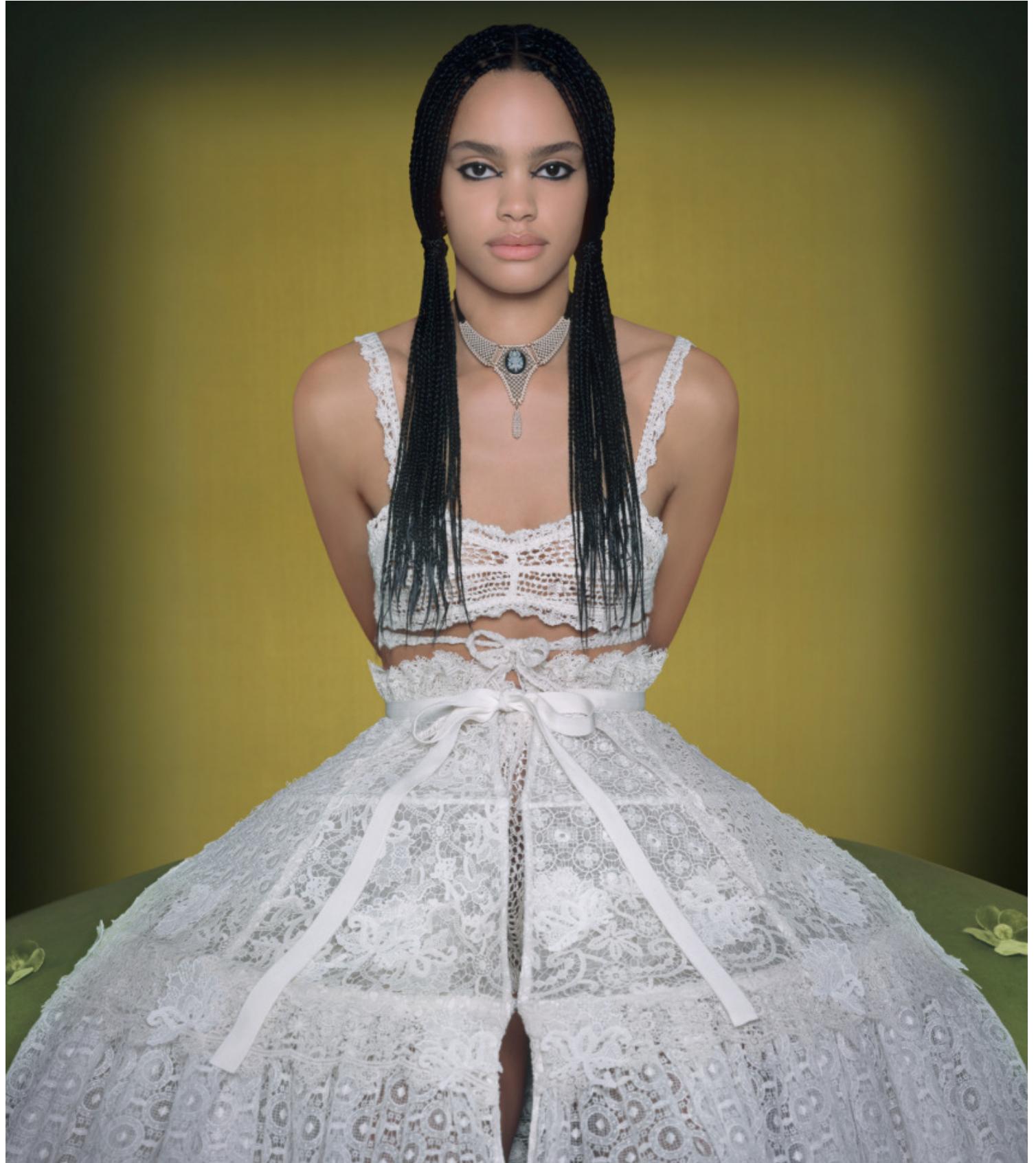


BVLGARI
ROMA



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75 YEARS OF INFINITE TALES





DIOR





DIOR





FENDI
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FENDI
ROMA



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PRADA





PRADA



RALPH
LAUREN





LOCK COLLECTION
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A close-up photograph of a woman's face and upper body. She has light brown hair pulled back, green eyes, and is wearing a light-colored, ribbed, long-sleeved dress. Her hands are on her hips, and she is looking directly at the camera. The background is plain white.

miu miu





miu miu



VALENTINO
GARAVANI



V



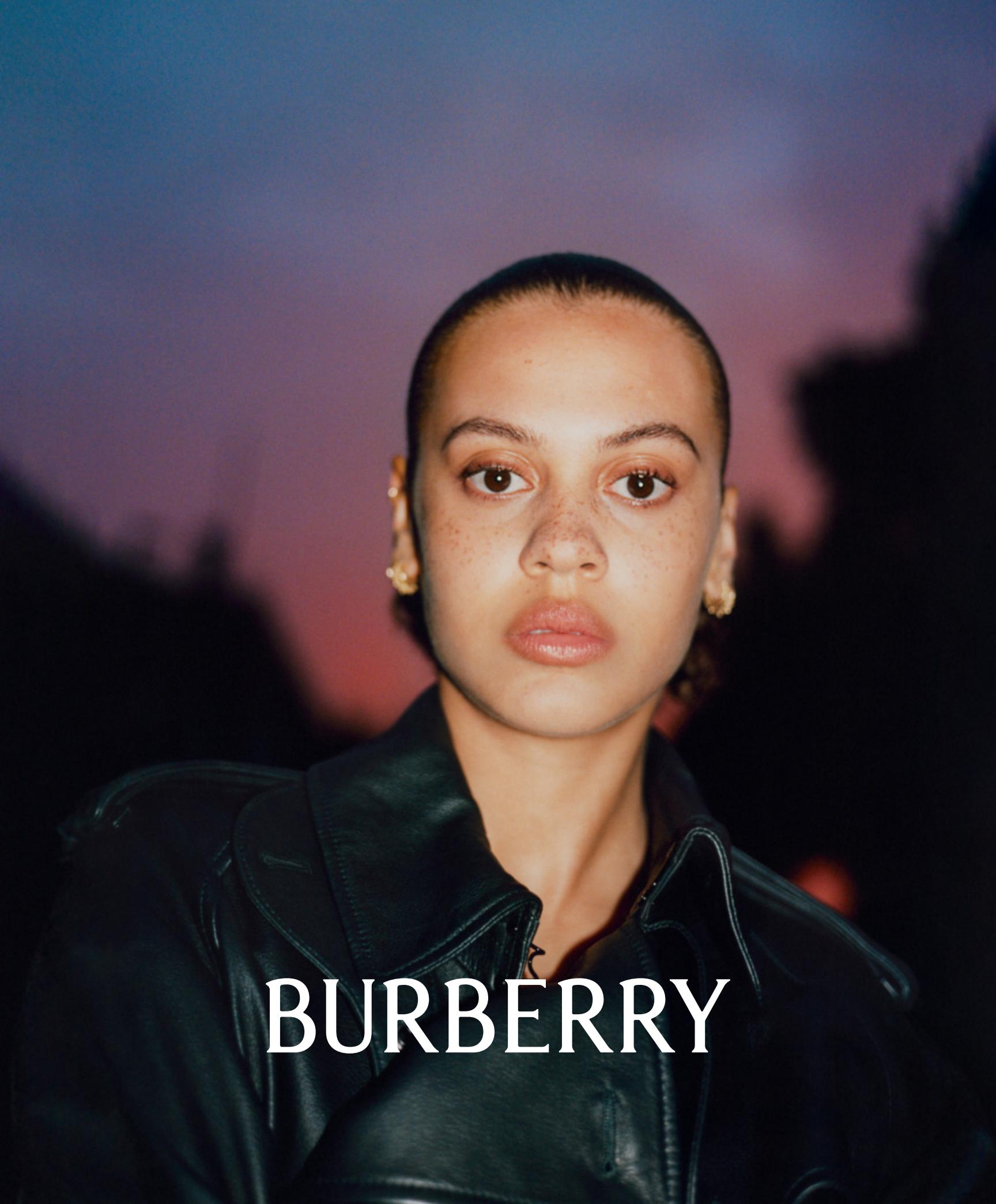
VALENTINO
GARAVANI



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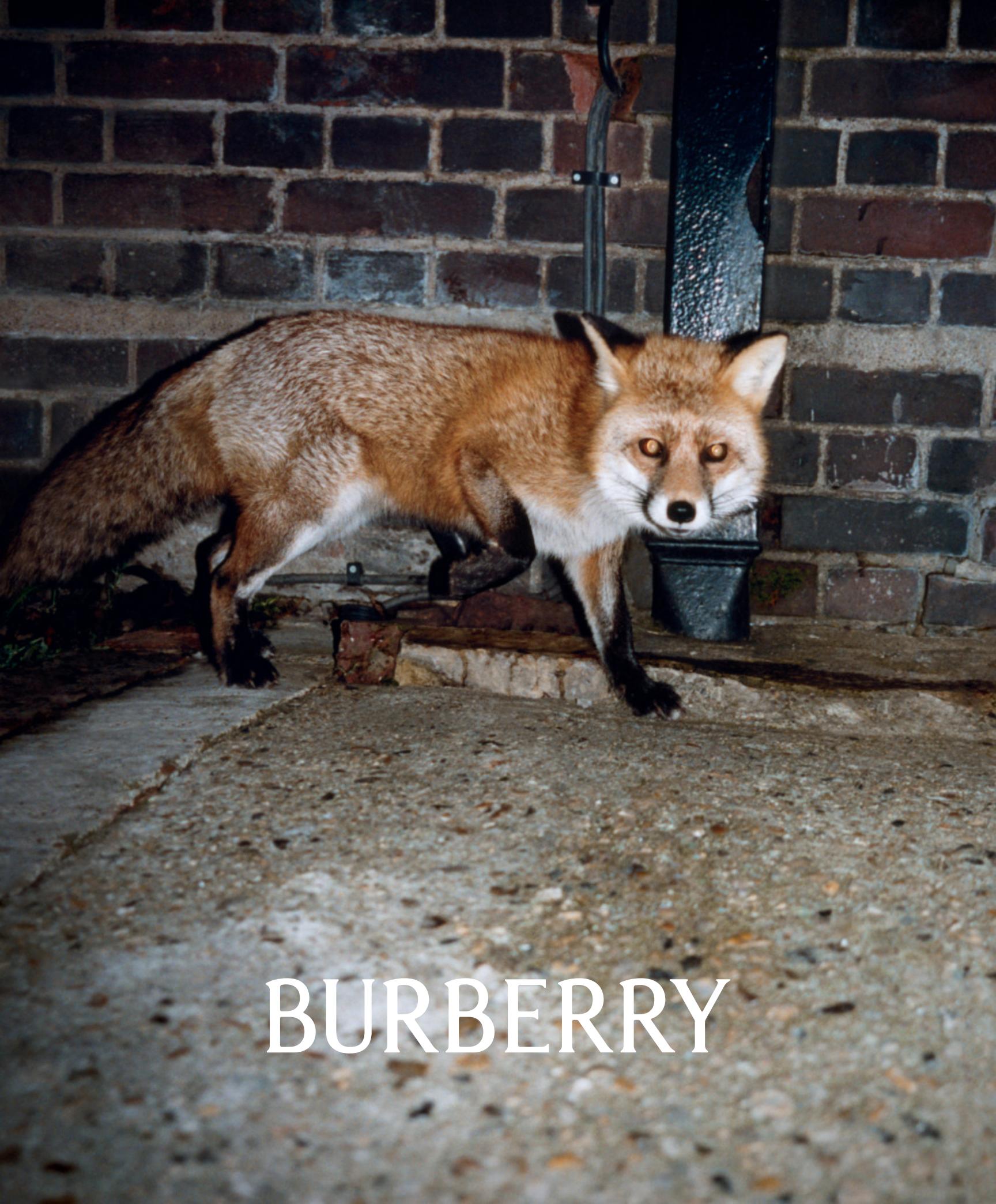


VALENTINO.COM

A close-up portrait of a woman with short, dark hair styled in a shaved head. She has brown eyes, freckles on her nose and cheeks, and is wearing small, gold hoop earrings. She is looking directly at the camera with a neutral expression. She is wearing a dark, zippered jacket. The background is a soft-focus, warm-toned red and orange.

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BURBERRY







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Ω
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A full-page advertisement featuring a woman standing in a red room. She has long dark hair and is wearing a black, off-the-shoulder dress with a large circular brooch at the bust. She is also wearing black trousers. She is holding a small black clutch bag with a gold handle. The background consists of red walls and floor, with a white column visible on the left.

FERRAGAMO



A medium shot of a young woman with long dark hair, smiling at the camera. She is wearing a sleeveless, knee-length dress with a bold yellow, black, and white abstract print. The dress features a wide yellow band across the chest and a fringe hem. The background is a light blue textured wall.

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Lucky Spring collection
Between the Finger™ ring
and pendant, rose gold, carnelian,
onyx and white mother-of-pearl.



Van Cleef & Arpels

Haute Joaillerie, place Vendôme since 1906





Lucky Spring collection
Clip and bracelet, rose gold, carnelian,
onyx and white mother-of-pearl.

VOGUE

March 2023



SISTER, SISTER

NADIA AND LAILA GOHAR (IN DRIES VAN NOTEN WITH CHANEL FINE JEWELRY AND CARTIER BRACELETS, AND POLO RALPH LAUREN, RESPECTIVELY) OF THE TABLEWARE LINE GOHAR WORLD. PHOTOGRAPHED BY NORMAN JEAN ROY.

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Up Front**
Ballet gave Alice Robb a way to be a girl—a specific template of femininity. What did it mean to be a woman without it?

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For Emily Adams Bode Aujla, making new things from vintage fabrics is old hat. Her debut women's line, though, as Robert Sullivan discovers, is anything but

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In Mumbai, a monumental fashion exhibition charts the crosscurrents of cultural influence

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When Thierry Mugler launched Angel in 1992, the iconic fragrance broke all the rules. Thirty years later, an updated formula arrives for a new generation



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Loro Piana





MaxMara





MaxMara

NORDSTROM



LOOKING FORWARD SPRING 2023

PHOTOGRAPHED BY NADINE IJEWERE



DRIES VAN NOTEN



THE ROW

A full-page photograph of a young woman laughing joyfully. She is wearing a light pink sleeveless dress with a floral pattern on the skirt and lace trim at the shoulders and hem. A large, chunky silver chain necklace is around her neck. She is holding a small white pearl necklace in her right hand. The background is a solid yellow. In the bottom right corner, there is a large sprig of orange-red flowers. The overall mood is bright and celebratory.

SIMONE ROCHA

NORDSTROM



SS23 CAMPAIGN
GIGI HADID
PHOTOGRAPHED BY HEJI SHIN

GIVENCHY





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EMMA ROBERTS In the spring fashion she wears all the time | Christopher John Rogers & more



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ETRO

VOGUE

March 2023



SEASON OF LIGHT

AMONG THE CENTURY-OLD BUILDINGS ON HENRY AND ANA PINCUS'S LONG ISLAND PROPERTY IS A FORMER PUMP HOUSE, SINCE CONVERTED INTO GRACEFUL LIVING QUARTERS. PHOTOGRAPHED BY NGOC MINH NGO.

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Into the Mystic
The neo-soul icon Erykah Badu has long made spiritual, theatrical, ethereal style her calling card. Finally, fashion has caught up with her.
By Chioma Nnadi

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Maximum City
Seoul is tomorrowland, teeming with models, actors, activists, and musicians who are breaking molds and leaning into what's now and what's next.

Monica Kim takes stock of a brave new world

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Maxwell Frost, the youngest member of Congress, is marching to his own beat.
By Suzy Exposito

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The reinvention of a waterfront retreat in New York became an occasion to envision a miniature village—elegant and easygoing at the same time. Chloe Schama pays a visit

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Catering as installation art? Tableware with a sense of humor? The creations of Laila and Nadia Gohar have turned food-world

self-seriousness delightfully on its head. By Tamar Adler

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He's the youngest player ever to reach number one in men's tennis. How far will Carlos Alcaraz go? By Gaby Wood

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This season, designers are reflecting our decidedly flawed world with perfectly imperfect pieces. By Maya Singer

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Two of a Kind
Dressed in spring's most captivating accessories, models and lifelong friends Lila Moss and Stella Jones paint the town

220
Just One Thing
Put a pin in it—it's the easiest (and most dazzling) way

to add a little flourish to your look. For Adut Akech, that pin just happens to be attached to a diamond Van Cleef & Arpels brooch

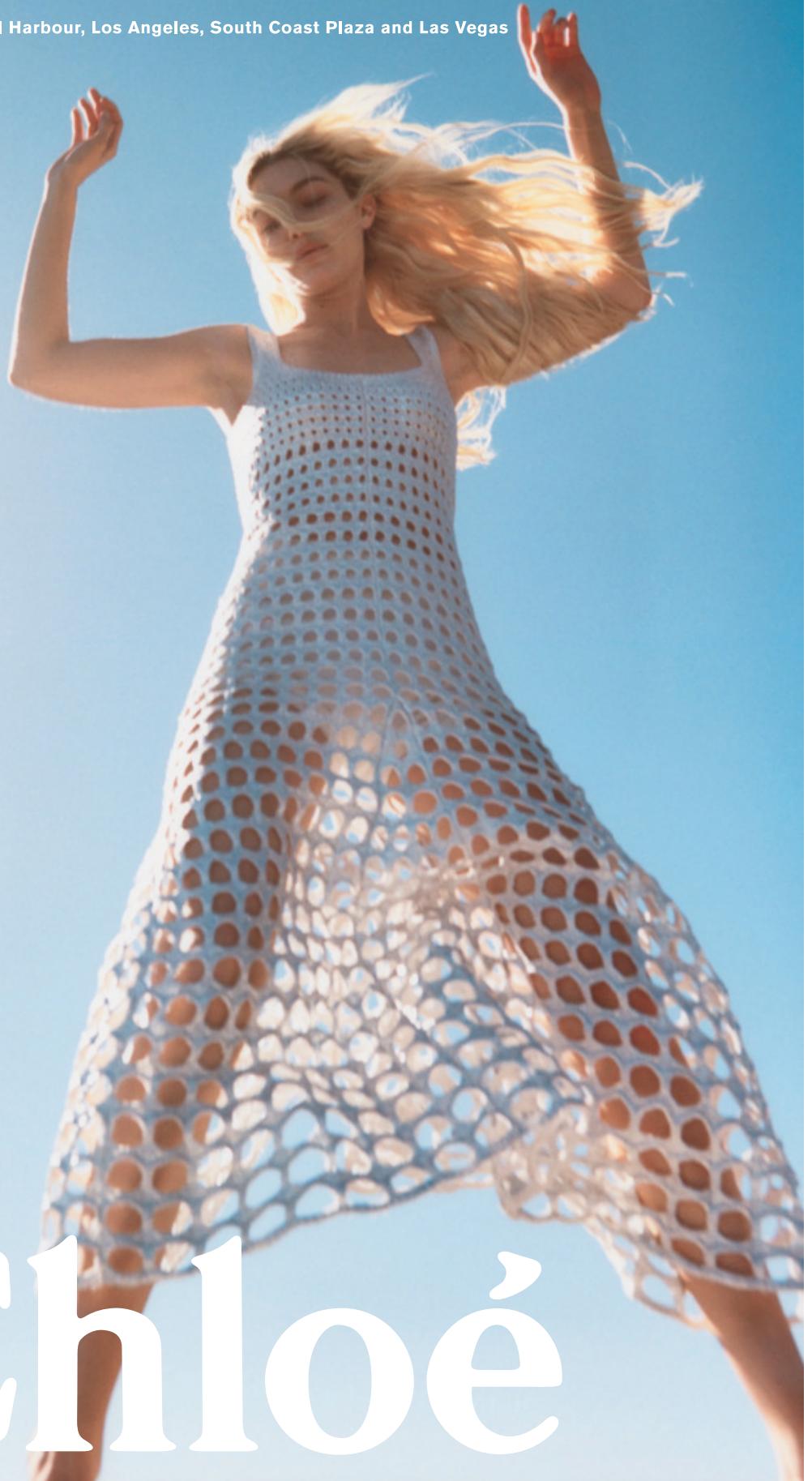
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Last Look

Cover Look What a Day

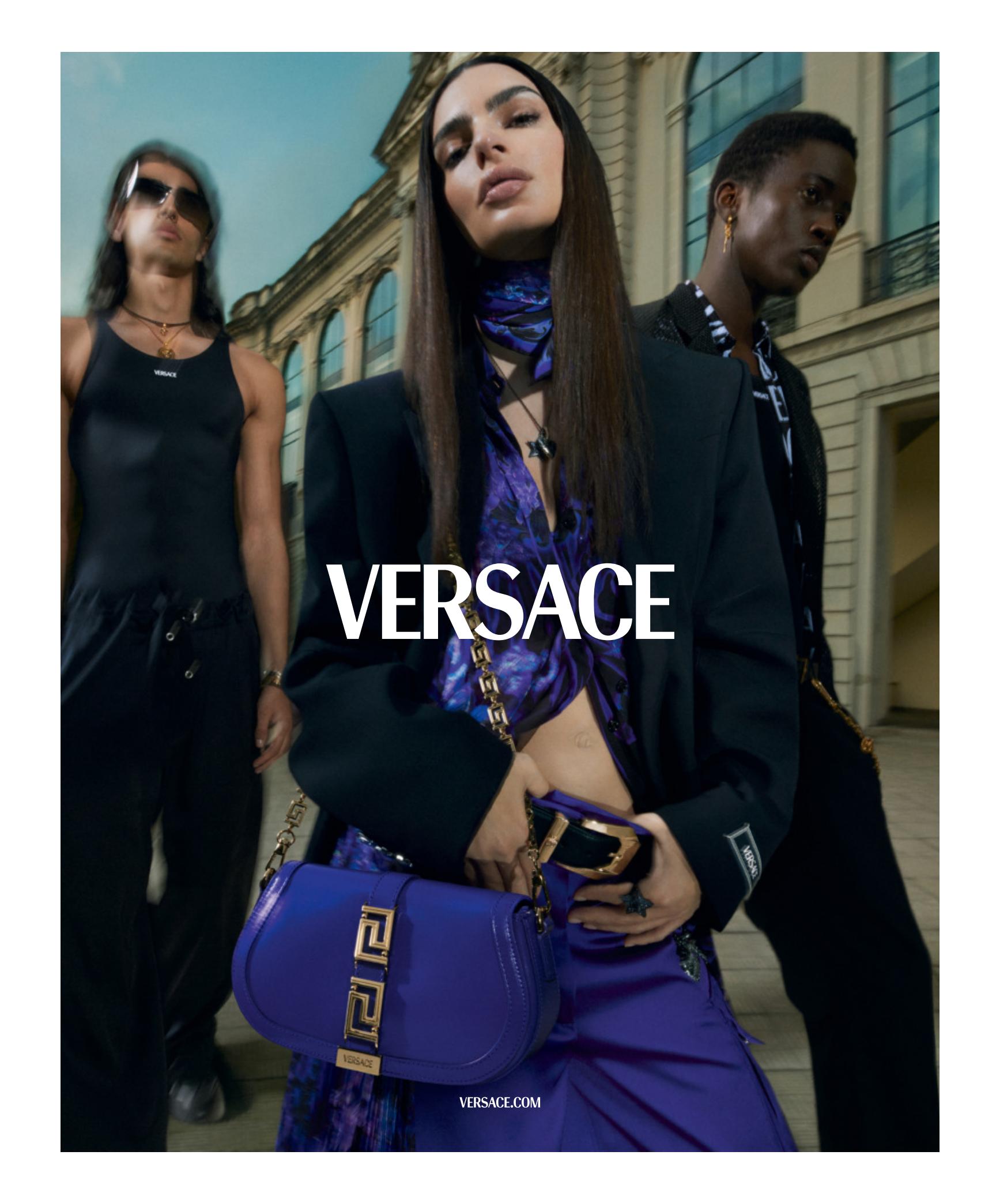
Erykah Badu wears a Marni x Erykah Badu coat. Hair, Jawara; makeup, Melanesia Hunter. Details, see In This Issue. Photographer: Jamie Hawkesworth. Fashion Editor: Alex Harrington.

New York, Bal Harbour, Los Angeles, South Coast Plaza and Las Vegas



Chloé





VERSACE

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Letter From the Editor



THE REAL DEAL

LEFT: MODEL YOON YOUNG BAE, IN SIMONE ROCHA, PHOTOGRAPHED BY CHO GI-SEOK. ABOVE: ERYKAH BADU, WEARING MARNI AT THE 2022 MET GALA.

the idealized visions we see on social media. “There is this fake idea of perfection that I have always hated,” says Miuccia Prada. “What I’ve done in my career so far is about introducing ‘the real’—more imperfection.” “*Realness* was an important word this season,” adds Van Noten about his own collection. “And so this wasn’t a ‘happy’ collection, but an optimistic one—because for me that’s more profound: the work we do every day to...continue moving forward.”

Erykah Badu, a neo-soul icon whose life and nearly three-decade career can seem like a series of brilliantly idiosyncratic improvisations, is our cover star, photographed by Jamie Hawkesworth and styled by Alex Harrington.

She let *Vogue*'s Chioma Nnadi into her world in Dallas, the city her family has called home for generations, and what a warm and personable world it is. Is anyone more authentic and mystically creative than Badu? She has been expressing herself through a fantastic wardrobe of outsize hats and platform shoes and other creations for decades, and fashion has only caught up with her. She is an influence on a new generation of musicians, continues to sell out arenas, and was front and center at the shows last season. She's also embarking on a collaboration with Risso, who says of Badu, “With Erykah, it’s a completely new world.”

Speaking of new worlds, *Vogue* traveled to Seoul to photograph spring fashion on models and musicians and other cultural figures who are on the vanguard there. The Korean capital is a city racing into the future—in technology, fashion, the arts—and we’re all riveted by its pace and innovation. Cho Gi-Seok’s photographs, styled by Kate Phelan, capture that dynamism as well as the city’s restlessness and energy, a place of individuals and singular talents who value above all—surprise, surprise—authenticity. I’m looking forward to planning a visit.

Amaritam.

Perfectly Imperfect

I'M WRITING THIS IN JANUARY, well into resolution season. And yet I don't know many people who actually made resolutions this year. Is the practice a little passé? So much has been said about the relentlessness of our age, and that very modern yearning for perfection—for so-called optimization (an awful word). But perhaps we've had enough? Perhaps something is shifting?

Fashion certainly thinks so. To see the spring collections last fall was to see designers celebrating imperfection, the handmade, that place where authenticity and creativity meet. Marni, led by the designer Francesco Risso, is a prime example of this, and *Vogue* contributing editor Maya Singer writes in this issue about the “purposeful imperfection” of Risso’s latest collection—the dangling threads and the seemingly offhand combinations of textures. A similar spirit was evident in Erdem’s new work, and Matthieu Blazy’s at Bottega Veneta, at Prada, and at Dries Van Noten. Asymmetries, patchwork effects, a glorious sense of incipient unraveling: It all reflects what it means to be human right now, that idea that life is nothing more than a work in progress, a determination to keep going—a notion that can fly in the face of



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Spring Summer 2023
Photographed by David Sims



79 Greene Street, New York
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A scenic view of palm trees and a stone balustrade overlooking a body of water.

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TOM FORD



EYEWEAR



A woman with long dark hair, wearing a form-fitting blue jumpsuit, is leaning against a white tiled wall. She is looking directly at the camera with a neutral expression. Her left leg is bent, and her foot is resting on a ledge. The background shows a bright, cloudy sky.

JIMMY CHOO

SPRING 2023
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Contributors



Killing It

"The concept for all my shoots right now is beauty," says photographer Norman Jean Roy. "I'm only interested in making everyone I photograph look beautiful, relaxed, happy." Roy made good on that ideal two times over in this issue, with both "Sister Act," Tamar Adler's profile of the inventive Gohar sisters (page 196), and "Trial by Fire," Adam Green's interview with actor Jodie Comer (page 180). Of the latter—seen above, surrounded by hairstylist Joey George, contributing fashion editor Max Ortega, and Roy himself—the photographer reports, "Jodie is such a lovely person with natural beauty, inside and out. We chatted a lot before and during the shoot, which always helps add shape and tone to a photograph."



Island Time

Late last August, photographer Ngoc Minh Ngo headed out to Long Island to capture the lush grounds and sweeping water views of Henry and Ana Pincus's rambling country home for "The Life Aquatic," written by Chloe Schama (page 188). Two prominent design-world couples had worked their magic on the place: architect Bastien Halard and landscape architect Miranda Brooks, as well as Alexandra and Michael Misczynski of Atelier AM. (From left, that's Alexandra, Miranda, Ngoc, Bastien, and Michael gathered together above.) "The location was amazing. Although it was in full summer, it felt so removed and idyllic," says Ngo. "At one point, Bastien took me out in a canoe so I could get a shot of the house from the water, and Miranda followed suit on a paddleboard. We all had a lovely time."



Beachy Keen

For this month's cover story, starring the neo-soul legend Erykah Badu—see Chioma Nnadi's "Into the Mystic," page 148—photographer Jamie Hawkesworth approached his larger-than-life subject with a light touch. "I like not really knowing much about who I'm photographing," Hawkesworth says. "At the best of times, you just try not to overthink it." (Contributing fashion editor Alex Harrington, on the other hand, is a major fan, having styled Badu for her runway debut at Vogue World: New York last fall.) A freewheeling spontaneity suffused the shoot day in Santa Barbara last December. "The nice thing about a beach is it's a very sort of universal place to be, and the light's always beautiful," Hawkesworth observes. "It wasn't really making a point too much of being somewhere. It was more about the light of being with Erykah." Working in two short bursts at dawn and dusk, Hawkesworth and Badu proved an inspired pairing. "We were kind of just running around for an hour on the beach, basically really enjoying taking photographs together."

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On Pointe

Ballet gave Alice Robb a way to be a girl—a specific template of femininity.
What did it mean to be a woman without it?

We are 11 or 12 years old, but most of us look younger; we have been chosen, in part, because we are small for our age. Our smiles are tense, our necks stretched, our backs erect. Perhaps we are pretending, as we've been taught, that a puppeteer is pulling up our heads by a string. We have been told that our ballet school is the best in the world; we have been told that we are lucky.

There are 20 of us in the photo, and we all want the same thing: to dance with the New York City Ballet.

My cheek is tilted toward the light, but my eyes are pointed down. This year, my body has begun to defy me: The curve of my hip is peeking out from my torso, disrupting the once smooth line of my leg. I can control my muscles and my weight, but, I am learning, I cannot control my bones.

For picture day, at least, I have managed to subdue my frizzy hair. It lies flat against my head, slicked into a bun so tight I can almost feel it tugging at my scalp. I don't want to add any volume: our school's founder, George Balanchine, said that a dancer's head should be small, and this will always be his institution, even if he has been dead for 20 years.

I am kneeling. My wrists are crossed in front of my heart—a gesture that, in classical ballets like *Giselle*, signifies love. Of course, I didn't choose this pose; I was only doing what I was told. Our teacher has arranged us in three rows and instructed us what to do with our hands and arms and legs. They don't have to tell us to smile.

I had been turned away twice when I was finally admitted to the School of American Ballet. Most afternoons from then on, I would hurry out of school as soon as the bell rang and hightail it across Central Park. The thrill of jogging up the escalator at Lincoln Center, pushing open the glass doors like I belonged, never wore off.

I learned to pour all my energy, mental and physical, into microscopic adjustments to the way I moved. I loved how my anxiety-prone brain would shut down as I strove to make my *fondue* "look like melting ice cream," or my *frappés* "like popping a bottle of Champagne"; how it was impossible to worry about the next day's math test or the middle school hierarchy while >112

BALLET SHOES

TEENAGE DANCERS, PHOTOGRAPHED BY ARTHUR ELGORT IN ST. PETERSBURG, RUSSIA, IN 2006.

PRODUCED BY JOHN VARVATOS ♦ GREG WILLIAMSON ♦ NICOLE RECHTER

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I thought about the placement of all 10 of my toes. I loved that when I entered the studio, I didn't have to worry about saying the right thing. I didn't have to talk at all.

At ballet, no one asked me what I wanted to be when I grew up; it went without saying. Of course I wanted to be a dancer. The dress code was strict and hadn't changed in decades. Making an effort on my appearance was mandatory, and hiding this effort unnecessary. I took lessons in stage makeup, learned to layer powder and bronzer and blush, to paint on a face that was, by the end, only loosely based on my own. Focusing on my looks wasn't vain; it was part of my art.

In October, a handwritten casting sheet for *The Nutcracker* was posted outside the dressing room. We crowded around, scanning for our names, and I jumped when I saw mine; I didn't care that I had been given one of the smallest parts. As a toy soldier in the ballet's battle scene, I spent about three minutes onstage each night, but I took my responsibilities—sashaying in a line, aiming a fake rifle at men in mouse costumes—very seriously. After our army was trounced and a mouse hauled me into the wings, I would join my friends backstage to watch the second act on a monitor or—if I spotted a free seat in the theater—sneak into the audience. I envied my classmates who got to wear frilly dresses and curl their hair for the party scene, but I was thrilled to be a part of it—entering through the stage door, lounging around the dressing room, and watching the company dancers warm up. I even loved picking dirty scraps of paper “snow,” which fell from the ceiling in a magical act—one blizzard, out of my clothes or my hair, like grains of sand after a day at the beach. It was proof that I had been onstage.

Outside the studio, I latched onto ballet as my identity. I wore my hair to school in a tight bun, and when I started needing a bra, I wore a leotard under my clothes instead. Some nights, I went to bed without washing off my stage makeup, and wore it proudly to school the next morning: I wanted everyone to know I was special. Anyone who entered my bedroom at home would be confronted by a veritable shrine to ballet. I collected pairs of pointe shoes autographed by New York City Ballet dancers and nailed them to the wall above my bed. (We would leave notes at the stage door, complimenting our favorite dancers and asking for their worn-out shoes.) Inside the dresser were drawers of oversized T-shirts emblazoned with the logos of various summer programs I'd passed through. The wall above it was dominated by a giant poster of Degas's *La Classe de Danse*, and I would fall asleep studying it: the girl posing in an eternal arabesque, the girl pouting on the sidelines, the girl primping in the back.

Puberty hit, and I looked on in horror as my reflection in the mirror changed. I had spent years learning the precise contour of my calves, the quirks of my toes, but all of a sudden, my body was

foreign to me. The mirrors lining every studio became instruments of torture. One year, I was in the running; the next, I was mostly ignored. For the third year in a row, I was cast in the same small role in *The Nutcracker*. Then I was kicked out of SAB.

And yet I couldn't accept that my ballet career was over. I told myself that my teachers had made a mistake and I enrolled in a less prestigious program. On my first day, I looked around at my new classmates, with their flat feet and their indifference, their messy buns and their barely concealed chatting during class, and wondered how I had fallen so far. I spent the next few years drifting around, dreaming of re-auditioning for SAB, making a dramatic and increasingly far-fetched comeback.

The first time I skipped ballet—conceding, at 15, that my prospects had dimmed from implausible to impossible—I felt like a truant, a criminal. I puttered around after school, confused as to

what I was supposed to do with this strange pocket of free time, waiting for—what? For someone from the studio to show up at my door, to call? To the best of my memory, no one ever did. This was just what happened sometimes. A girl was absent for a few days, and you would hear rumors—she had moved away or gotten a boyfriend—and there was one less girl to compete with.

I took the Degas poster off my wall and did my best not to think about ballet. Maybe I'll discover talents I've never known, I thought on good days. Maybe I'm an athlete—a jock! At ballet, I had been cautioned not to go for runs—my legs might get comfortable in the turned-in position—so, in an act of rebellion, I signed up for cross-country. But I fell behind on long runs, ended up lost among the tourists in Central Park. I couldn't keep up, and I didn't really care. I quit after a few weeks. In the spring, I joined the track team, mostly because they took walk-ons, and decided my event would be the hurdles. Clearing a hurdle is a little like doing a grand jeté, I thought. (Only if you're doing it very badly, I learned.) I liked my weekly flute lesson, but sometimes I learned melodies I recognized

from ballet—Bizet or Delibes—and I felt disoriented, like I had gotten lost in the wrong body. But I was no longer a dancer, I told myself. Ballet had nothing to do with me.

When I gave up on the flute, I put it in a drawer and never thought about it again. But I couldn't put my body in a drawer. My instrument was still with me all the time; I had to find a way to live with it.

And even though I could stop going to class, avoid Lincoln Center, and cancel my subscription to *Pointe* magazine, I couldn't unlearn the values of ballet. Sometimes, in social settings or at school, I felt like I was still reading from a different script. Even as I finished high school and college, I couldn't stop stalking my old ballet classmates on Facebook or dreaming about dancing at night. In my early 20s, I became obsessed with being as thin as possible, and I wondered if I was trying—now that it was too late—to look



STAGE LEFT
THE AUTHOR, AGE 10, PREPARING TO PERFORM IN NEW YORK CITY BALLET'S *THE NUTCRACKER*.

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like the dancer I'd never become, as if trying to prove my fidelity to an ex-lover who had moved on. Occasionally, on request, I would dig up my pointe shoes—I could never bring myself to throw them away—and balance on my toes, then ask myself when the once central fact of my life had been reduced to a party trick.

Fifteen years after I officially quit ballet, I still attend the occasional open class, and I often catch myself daydreaming: The teacher stops me on my way out to ask me who I am, what's my story, how did someone with so much talent end up here? Out of loyalty to Balanchine, I would keep my fourth-position back leg straight as I prepare for a pirouette. (Classically trained dancers take off from two bent knees—an easier position from which to push off—but Balanchine dancers pride themselves on the ability to spring up from an off-kilter pose.)

When I read that Balanchine chose Guerlain's L'Heure Bleue for his then muse Maria Tallchief, I looked up the fragrance online. I saw that it was still being produced—the website said it had notes of iris and vanilla—and I ordered it. The liquid inside the bottle was golden yellow, and the top resembled an old-fashioned glass stopper. My first thought, when I sprayed it in the bathroom, was that it would be a good choice for keeping track of someone's whereabouts in the theater (as Balanchine claimed to do)—the smell is overwhelming. It's loud and sweet and a little fusty. All day, I sniffed my wrists, feeling both glamorous and creepy.

A group of women gathered in a friend's living room. Coats and shoes came off; feet went up on the coffee table. Reflexively, I appraised my friends' socked arches. I felt like a lecherous man giving women on the street a once-over, but I couldn't help it. B's were almost flat, but I doubt it had ever bothered her. K's were high—so high that, if she just stood up, she would be halfway up to pointe. I was jealous of her. What a waste, I thought. She doesn't even know how lucky she is. I doubt she appreciates her feet; I wonder if she has ever even noticed.

I'm not sure what I wanted to find when I went digging for old photos in the storage boxes beneath my childhood bed. Did I want to see confirmation of what I suspected—that I'd never been very good at ballet? Or did I want to find evidence that I'd been better than I remembered—that those years of devotion hadn't been totally deluded? Digital cameras were not yet in everyone's pockets in the early aughts, and my parents shot few home videos. If there were Polaroids, they have been lost to time or periodic bedroom purges. I turned up a few grainy VHS tapes of summer-program recitals, but I couldn't pick myself out of the pixelated lineup.

It was in my old, defunct email inbox (sugarplumfairy54@yahoo.com) that I located them: the audition photos I had submitted to summer programs at age 13. I wore a plain black leotard in front of a blank studio wall—costumes or busy backdrops would have been frowned on—and struck a few basic poses: my legs crossed demurely in fourth position on pointe; one leg raised in a shallow V in attitude derrière.

I looked different than I'd imagined. My feet looked decent, although I suspected I wore broken-down pointe shoes to make my arches appear more pronounced. My placement was passable. But the biggest surprise was my body. My hips were not the monstrosities I remember. The problem was the opposite: I looked weak. My arms were droopy and my balance looked precarious, as though my stringy legs might not be strong enough to hold up the weight of my body. I didn't appear to be dancing so much as clenching my muscles and hoping I didn't tip over. I wondered if I fell off pointe as soon as this photo was snapped.

On a recent weekend trip to Seattle, my friend E and I found ourselves with a free afternoon. E hadn't been to the ballet in years, and we decided to catch a matinee of Pacific Northwest Ballet's *Swan Lake*. I had known E—a voluble writer in her 30s—for almost a decade, and I had never seen her lost for words. But at the end of the ballet, she was speechless. It was so beautiful, was all she could say.

And it was. What we had witnessed together was nothing short of a miracle. We had been swept away to an ancient palace and an enchanted lake. There had been raucous court dances and moonlit communions. We had seen doomed maidens dance with desperate joy. We had heard a live orchestra perform the spectacular Tchaikovsky score. Dumbstruck awe was really the only appropriate response.

And yet when E asked me what I thought, the first thing that came to mind was that the dancer playing the Swan Queen—a role so intense that just learning it drove Natalie Portman's *Black Swan* character to madness—

had fallen out of her fouettés in act three. The sequence of 32 fouetté turns is one of the most notoriously difficult in the entire classical repertoire; it takes enormous strength and perfect timing. After 30 fouettés—I couldn't help but count—the Swan Queen stumbled.

This was the only flub, the only obvious imperfection in a three-hour production. And yet this was the moment that stayed with me most. *My brain is broken*, I thought, as we filed out of our velvet seats—*my perspective is permanently skewed*.

I wondered how the dancer, the star of the show, would feel when she got home. I wondered if she would think about her triumphant pas de deux with Prince Siegfried. If she knew that her final leap into the lake made at least one audience member cry. If she replayed the standing ovation she received. I doubt it.

As we made our way out of the theater, I saw little girls in frilly dresses and shiny Mary Janes clinging to their mothers' hands as though afraid of all the beauty they'd just seen. Some of them were wearing tight buns. Had they come straight from class that morning, or did they just want to look like dancers all the time? I saw it in their eyes—the yearning to be like the women they watched onstage. Maybe this would be a passing phase; maybe it would determine the course of their childhoods, their adolescence.

When I mentioned the fouetté flub to E, she didn't know what I was talking about. □

Adapted from Don't Think, Dear: On Loving and Leaving Ballet © 2023 from Mariner Books, out in February.



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Making History

Creating inspired new pieces with fabrics from fashion's past seems to be in Emily Adams Bode Aujla's genes. Robert Sullivan takes us inside the long-awaited debut of her new women's line.

Though Emily Adams Bode Aujla, founder of Bode, has now designed her very first line of clothing for women, it's not the first time she has designed women's clothes. Students of Bode's short but wildly successful history will note that while at school—simultaneously studying fashion at Parsons School of Design and philosophy at Eugene Lang College—Emily and her roommate routinely crafted their own clothes for the weekend ahead. "On Fridays, we would stay up late and make a skirt out of crushed velvet or something," Emily remembers. Making women's clothes, it seems, wasn't so much a challenge as a natural occurrence. "It just came so naturally to me that I wasn't as inspired by it."

Other factors steered her early direction too: At Parsons, after one design assignment ("Astronauts, maybe?"), a professor suggested she had a knack for menswear. And then there was the prevailing teaching on fashion at the time (and especially women's fashion), which could emphasize design over material. Emily, however, was fascinated by fabrics and cloth, particularly by textiles that were less inventive than historically pragmatic—textiles that had been *worn* by people, or many people. "I was more obsessed," she says, "with something that was steeped in history and came from somebody's closet."

All of which led to that day in 2016 when Emily made her first fit sample for Bode, refashioning a favorite vintage quilt top into high-waisted trousers, thereby kicking off what has become her game-changing trademark: clothing that is ostensibly for men, though practically for any body at all. In our hypercharged culture, Bode's pieces stand out for their quiet politics, for taking their energy from the thrill of thrift shopping—and, in an overwhelmingly virtual world, for the charge of the handmade. Her first menswear show, in a loft in Tribeca, evoked deep emotions, with pieces viscerally reflecting on the loss of an old family home. "My theory is, if you have an emotional connection to something, other people will too," she says.

Now, seven years later, recreating a piece of 1970s Cape Cod in Paris's 1st arrondissement during January's menswear shows, she has at long last presented what her fans have been waiting for: dresses and skirts, silk tops, and her version of lingerie. The Crane Estate, as she's calling this collection, includes everything from a formfitting and floor-length gown sparkled with emerald green sequins to a berry-print chiffon day dress, loose and light, an echo of a summer picnic in the past. Cardigans are Bode-like in their quiet, complicated textures and patterns, the colors seemingly from a 1970s film:

olive and brown and high-powered reds. There are bolero jackets, blazers, and a black satin camisole, buttoned and fitted. On a sheer dress, beaded flowers run along a vine; a bias-cut windowpane dress is accented with flounces and fringes. Like Bode men's, it's not old pieces remade—it's great ideas reimagined for the present, in fabrics that communicate various pasts.

LA-based singer-songwriter Gracie Abrams—her debut album, *Good Riddance*, is out this month—was among the first people to not only see but experience the new women's line when she was asked by Bode to sit for a shoot. "There's such confidence and security and stillness in Emily's pieces," says Abrams, who was already a Bode fan. When the singer met the designer, Emily talked not so much about fashion as about life. "She gave me a history lesson on the women in her family," Abrams says. Then she tried things on. "When I saw and felt the clothing, it genuinely is so her—and the woman that I want to be."

For the record, Emily was in no rush to produce a women's line: She already had her work cut out for her as she played with the genders culturally ascribed to particular fabrics and cuts and the highlighted histories of American craft. In the latter case, Bode connected with factories that didn't just make more of the same pieces—fashion's modern tendency—but different ones: detailed, unusual, often hand-sewn with old techniques. Her recent pearly shirts, which reference working-class London's pearly societies, were refashioned with deadstock buttons from Muscatine, Iowa, where circa 1910 Mississippi River clamshells were transformed into one third of the world's pearl buttons.

It's this highlighting of craft that appeals to her friends in the arts, like Tyler Mitchell, the photographer and owner of a navy blue Bode cropped charm jacket who, in his own work, reimagines the past to inspire new ways forward. "They're really trying to get to the root of what their clothes are about," he says. "They can contain histories and stories, and they can be personal rather than about style or a trend." Another Emily Bode theory: "If you know where something comes from, you care for it more."

Along the road to Bode women, there was also a small empire happening around the part of Lower Manhattan that was, in the 19th century, the center of the apparel trade: a Bode store on Hester Street, adjacent to a Bode tailor shop that doubled as Aujla's Indian Coffee House, named for Emily's husband, Aaron Aujla. Another Bode store opened in LA—one is now in the works >120



MATERIAL GIRLS

Emily Adams Bode Aujla with singer-songwriter Gracie Abrams, wearing a muslin dress by Bode and a 1920s crepe paper hat.

SHINING EXAMPLE

Model Irina Shayk wears a coat, jacket, and fringed top by Bode. Ana Khouri ear cuff. Fashion Editor: Tabitha Simmons. Photographed by Cass Bird.



for London, another in Paris—as did The River, a speakeasy in the shadow of the Manhattan Bridge, all of them by Green River Project, the design firm of Aaron and Benjamin Bloomstein that began when the two artists were searching for a professional groove and Emily said: “You guys are crazy—you should be doing interiors!”

At Bode, Aaron works with Emily, along with Aaron’s brother Dev, the CEO of both Bode and Green River, in what has become a family business that works hard to grow slowly. But to an outsider, the Bode-Aujla partnership seems to have kicked off back when Emily was still in college and living around the corner from the couple’s current Chinatown apartment, a small but spacious set of rooms where fabrics seem like your favorite corduroys and the wood is reminiscent of the Pacific Northwest where Aaron grew up. It was in this very apartment that, around the time Bode’s men’s line began to take off in 2020, Emily—already feeling the pressure to design for women and trying to ignore it—turned to Aaron and said, “I think I have a few more years...”

“Ever since I’ve known Emily, she has known what she wants to do and when she wants to do it,” Aaron told me when he arrived at Bode’s Brooklyn studios recently, meeting up with Emily as she worked out the new collection. All around us, pieces were being sewn in rooms filled with stacks of gorgeous deadstock fabrics, vintage quilts and coverlets—materials of myriad provenance to make one-of-a-kind pieces. I spotted remnants of the pre-fall 2022 men’s line, based on their wedding that September, and if you know the details of the Bode-Aujla partnership you can see them in that collection: part New England, with a splash of the South (Emily grew up in Atlanta); part Punjabi culture as it adapted to British Columbia, just before WWII, when Aaron’s father’s family arrived in North America, his mother’s in the late 1800s. The women’s line began to take shape around the time of the wedding, the timing a surprise even to Aaron. What was Emily waiting for? A particular muse or muses—an inspiration somehow distinct, she stresses, from what inspires her to make Bode men. “My muses are, quite frankly, my husband, and my family,” she says. “They shape who I am, so I am inspired to make things that they cherish.”

As time passed and fans clamored—women, especially, who wanted dresses for events that seemed to call for dresses—the obvious became unavoidable. And, as Aaron sees now, even more obvious. “When Emily decided she was going to do women’s, there was no doubt that her mom and her sisters would be the foundation,” he says. Janet, Diane, Nancy, and Jackie—“the sisters,” as Emily and Aaron refer to them—are four women who among them are mother and artist, advertising executive, photographer, and nonprofit director, relatives whom Emily speaks of both as real people and as muses.

“At first,” Emily told me, thinking back over the past few years, “the aunts made their way into the men’s store, but then when you’re dressing the aunts as themselves...”

Aaron interjected. “Can I just say something? It’s the hair,” he says. “It always had to do with the hair.” Emily is nodding, and looking

toward the sisters, pinned up in old photos, each easily mistaken for Ali MacGraw on the Cape in 1978.

“I totally agree,” says Emily. “It’s interesting when you have a group of people who essentially kept the same hairstyle throughout their lives.”

“It forms an *identity*,” says Aaron.

“Yes,” says Emily, “and it says these are real women who were who they are now—the same that they were when they were 16. The sisters have changed, but their identities have stayed very true.”

Which brings us again to the birth of the Bode women’s collection, for which Emily goes back in time with her mom, Janet, to a summer on Cape Cod in 1976, and a true story. Janet is working at the Crane Estate, a big old house, living in the servants quarters. A swan lives in a cranberry bog, and Janet serves dinner to the elegant homeowner, a pianist and horticulturist born at the turn of the 19th century, taking her seat each evening in the formal dining room wearing gowns from the 1920s. The results, for Emily, are a dialogue between two pasts, the ’70s and the ’20s, with elegant silk dresses, the sheer lightness shaped with strings of glass beads, and gold sequined shorts paired with a quintessential ’70s turtleneck. Sailor pants that might have sailed in WWI stand alongside a sweater that Emily’s grandmother wore during Watergate.

Janet herself talks about that summer with her dressed-to-the-nines employer as if it just happened—or so it seemed when we spoke. “I learned her history, what her life was like,” she says. The designer’s mom also remembers the childhood version of Emily not only as someone just as vintage-interested as she was—growing up, Janet and her sisters shopped on Elm Street in Worcester, Massachusetts, buying old pieces and fabrics—but also as both quietly confident and supremely attentive, especially to older generations; a listener. “It’s almost like Emily feels that connection,” she continues.

When Emily goes through the collection, she notes the influence of costume-making, references to the time when clothing was fashioned with lace or trim, or with materials used in upholstery. “In the ’70s, there was more of this idea that if you couldn’t buy it, you’d make it,” she says, “so there are lots of pieces that are like that dress that you make for a competition, or a costume party, or something like that—I want to keep that home element, that domestic and emotional element as part of the collection.” Success, for Emily, is when a customer is asked if they made what they’re wearing—or, as she said to me toward the end of my studio visit, “Is that your family’s tablecloth?”

For his part, Aaron enjoys the surprises, one of which happened after they had photographed some of Bode’s women’s clothes worn by a model who, naturally, had long brown hair, like the sisters. When the film came back, Aaron did a double take. “There was this photo, and I looked at it, and there’s Emily at 20 years old, when I met her in the winter in New York City, with that braid, that wool hat on,” he says. “I swear I took this photo of Emily when she was in college. It’s almost like everything comes full circle.” □



THE RIGHT NOTE

“There’s such confidence and security and stillness in Emily’s pieces,” says Abrams. Bode top and wool twill trousers.

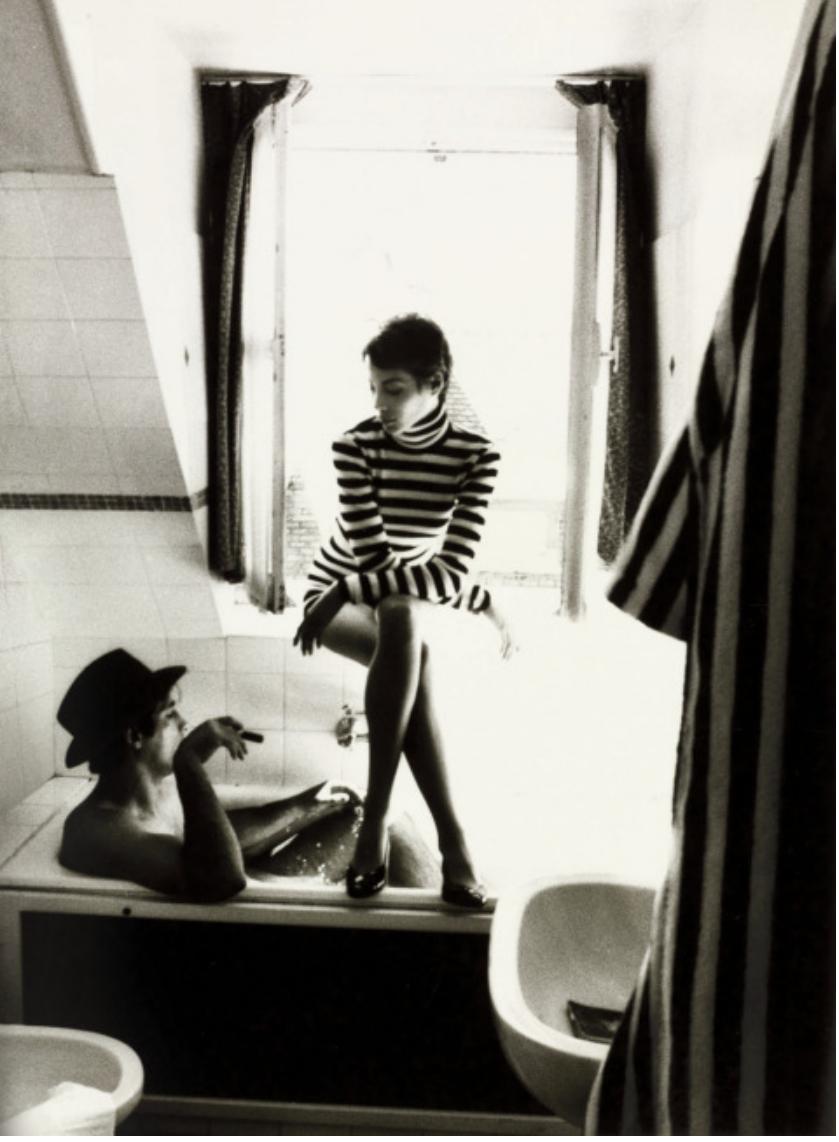


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BUBBLE AND SQUEAK

LEFT: Christy Turlington photographed for Vogue in 1990 by Ellen von Unwerth.
BELOW: A bathroom at the new Fouquet's hotel in New York.

There is nothing more centering—or coveted, in our overstimulated lives—than a moment of mind-calming silence. How gratifying, then, that hotels are paying increased attention to the simple tub. At the refurbished Hotel Chelsea in Manhattan, rooms are fitted with chubby six-foot Waterworks models—the better to read in, says hotelier Sean MacPherson, who takes his novels to the tub. The new Ritz-Carlton NoMad in New York has introduced streamlined Claybrook models, positioned with views of the skyline and equipped with bath salts from Gilchrist & Soames. At the new Canoe Place Inn & Cottages in Long Island's Hampton Bays, Brooklyn-based design team Workstead installed homey Maykke cast-iron claw-foot vessels. A tub cut from a single slab of marble sits beneath a Moroccan lantern at the Omni Scottsdale Resort & Spa at Montelucia, while Seattle's Hotel 1000 has designed a menu of bathing options ranging from CBD bath bombs to tubside caviar, delivered by a personal bath butler. Marie Antoinette would approve.

At Fouquet's, which I visited on a dark December day, the hotel's signature (secret) scent enveloped me as soon as I stepped inside the lobby. But the real bone-thawing took place upstairs, where the bath was deep, the water piping, and dark chocolate had been provided for aquatic snacking. I felt my limbs grow lighter as the soapy surface rose to my earlobes—a soporific success, some inner coil of tension had loosened 10 degrees even after I ventured back onto the concrete streets. During a quick trip down to Washington, DC—no kids!—I stayed at the Rosewood in Georgetown, where general manager Timothy Edgecombe showed me the hotel's varied options, among them a Victoria + Albert asymmetric model that looks a bit, he admitted, like the Hussein Chalayan-designed “egg” Lady Gaga emerged from during the 2011 Grammys, and a circular black marble number surrounded by mirrored walls—a little bit *Scarface*, a little bit lavish. My own accommodations included a lovely pewter basin where I fended off the tripledemic with sinus-clearing salts. With not a plastic bath toy in sight, it was a solace and a salve.—CHLOE SCHAMA

Soak It Up

Hotels are telling us to slow down and take to the tub.

I have a colleague who travels the world to report on hotels and parties. Her Instagram is a pastiche of how the other half lives—and by the other half I mean those without kids. But the post of hers that really made my heart race had little to do with far-flung social engagements or uninterrupted adult conversation: It showed her reclining in a tub, lauding the elegant setup at the new Fouquet's hotel in New York. A bathing experience minus the squeak of rubber duckies—a truly tantalizing prospect.

In the immortal words of comedian Ali Wong, I no longer want to lean in, I want to lie down. All this concurrent career-building and child-rearing is really quite a lot—and is there anything more simultaneously indulgent and simple than a bath to tune it all out? It also holds the promise of productivity: Marie Antoinette breakfasted in the tub (a lady ahead of her time—many 18th-century citizens believed it was downright dangerous to submerge one's skin); Winston Churchill counted among life's essentials “hot baths, cold champagne, new peas, and old brandy,” according to his letters. Modern-day divas know their value too: When she accepted her Emmy last fall, Jennifer Coolidge alerted the audience she had prepared with a lavender soak.



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Root Cause

On the runway and the red carpet, hair color upkeep has taken a downturn. Hanna Hanra skips the salon and gets real on regrowth.



I have been bleaching my hair a solid, uninterrupted blond—not brassy, not gray, but a shade of pure peroxide, like Barbie or Pamela Anderson—since 2002, when I persuaded a friend to lovingly paint my entire head with a packet of drug-store powder bleach and let it cook. My scalp burned and itched. Inches of my hair snapped off, but the result was glorious. It was unnatural, and unkempt, and radical—a

kind of imperfect perfection that rebelled against the glossy-lipped, high-definition, pseudo-real pop world that MTV was peddling at the time. I didn't want to slip into a pair of leather chaps like Christina Aguilera; I wanted the '70s grit of Debbie Harry.

Despite my decades-long desire for non-conformity, I always feel a bit of anxiety when I see that reverse skunk-streak of thick, dark chestnut emerge from my part.

I don't mind a bit of regrowth—just enough to recall my grunge-kid past—but I still return to the bleach bottle with regularity. So you can imagine my delight when our current arbiters of youth and style took on the unspoken rules of touch-ups. >126

WINNING STREAK

Model Gigi Hadid as a platinum blond with a hint of hair colors past along her part.

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"I just left it to grow," the hairstylist Chris Appleton tells me of Kim Kardashian's naturally dark strands, about two inches of which were highly visible along her hairline after she went platinum last summer. At the CFDA Awards in November, Kardashian picked up the Innovator Award for her shapewear coup, memorably showing off her Skims—and blatantly black, slicked-back roots. She wasn't the only one. Gigi Hadid, also recently platinum, proudly displayed her brunette regrowth, seemingly intentionally skipping what would have otherwise been mandatory pre-red-carpet maintenance.

"Until COVID, lots of people would have gone to the salon every three or four weeks," confirms Bleach London founder Alex Brownsell, who suggests that the shift away from more regular root repair extends back to lockdown, when we all just got used to living with the inconvenience of our natural hair colors. The colorist, who specializes in high-impact transformations for clients such as Georgia May Jagger and Florence Welch at her salons in the UK and Los Angeles, is also quick to point to inflation,

which is impacting cost of living on a global scale; less disposable income means fewer visits to the colorist. "Many people are now leaving their roots for three months and longer," says Brownsell. Bleach recently added an extra-long service to account for the time it takes to accommodate clients when they inevitably come back. But in the

"Suddenly, people are seeing themselves with roots and thinking, This looks quite nice"

interim, an interesting phenomenon has taken hold, she reports. "Suddenly, people are seeing themselves with roots and thinking, This looks quite nice." And the critics agree. "People love it when Kim wears roots," adds Appleton of the social media reaction the now-back-to-brunette mother of four often receives. "No one has ever said, 'I wish you'd do her roots.'"

I just hit seven weeks in my root cycle, and if I'm being honest, I find myself looking in the mirror and uttering this very sentence. There is a hairbreadth between don't-care hair and looking like you're about to take up residency as an ornamental hermit, which is why colorists like Los Angeles-based Victoria Hunter have begun purposely placing a "shadow root"—a blending technique in which a darker shade of pigment is applied directly to the roots and combed outward—into most dye jobs for a more seamless contrast out the gate. "I feel like people are accepting these kinds of visible imperfections more," adds Hunter. "Plus, hair just looks so much cooler when there's a root."

I learned this lesson firsthand when I experienced one of the defining moments of my career as a writer and a blond. A few years ago, I interviewed Harry when Blondie was on tour following the release of their first new album since 2014. At the end of our chat, the 77-year-old stood up and took my hand. "Can we get a picture?" she asked, smiling. "We have exactly the same hair." Grow-out never felt so good. □



Bloom Appétit

Two new cookbooks showcase the delightful culinary range of edible flowers.

Even if you're having pork," says Northern Ireland-based chef Erin Bunting, "that pig was probably, somewhere, eating flowers." Bunting is describing the way flowers are more intertwined with what we consume than we might think—a point made in the new cookbook she coauthored with Jo Facer, **The Edible Flower** (Laurence King Publishers), out this month. These chefs see rose petals as a perfect ingredient for a summer berry pavlova, lavender as an enhancement for slow-roasted lamb, geranium as the essence of a sweet sorbet, and marigolds as punctuation for a classic Irish soda bread. For Bunting and Facer, a couple who fled busy London 9-to-5s to start a catering business in 2016, it all starts in the garden. "We grow edible flowers among our potatoes, beans, and our courgettes because it's lovely. When you're working in the garden, why not make it a beautiful, colorful, joyful place to be?" says Facer. "But they also attract loads of pollinators and insects, making it a more biodiverse and, ultimately, easier place to grow great vegetables."

The flower-to-table trend is one that Los Angeles-based chef Loria Stern, who operates a catering business wholly rooted in botanicals, celebrates in her new book, **Eat Your Flowers** (William Morrow). Out next month, Stern's book details the many ways in which you can infuse your tamales

with hibiscus jackfruit or your cocktails with prickly pear. "I really wanted readers to see more than baked goods," says Stern, who is admittedly best known for the pressed-flower shortbread cookies that took Instagram and Pinterest by storm in 2018. In her cookbook, she's compiled how-tos for her most-requested (and photogenic) meals. Not to be missed is her recipe for rice paper summer rolls, in which crisp Persian cucumbers, shaved carrots, and vibrant-hued pansy petals appear like little kaleidoscope tubes. "They look like stained glass," says Stern, who forages locally for her blooms or grows them in her Mount Washington garden.

Should you not be blessed with a garden or a green thumb, floral culinary arranging is more accessible than ever before: Gourmet grocers like Whole Foods and Eataly have begun to include flowers in the produce aisle, Stern ships fresh and dried petals nationwide, and the local farmers market might be an untapped trove. "The farmers definitely grow edible flowers to attract pollinators," says Stern, "so if they're not bringing them to the market, just ask to buy them," she says. "I guarantee they would be thrilled." —LILAH RAMZI

TABLE OF EARTHLY DELIGHTS

A floral "arrangement" from Loria Stern's new cookbook.

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Turbo 'Tox

Often lasting twice as long as any other neurotoxin on the market, Daxxify makes its US debut.

Are you excited?" Ellen Marmur, MD, asks me, beaming from behind her mask, when I settle into a treatment room at her white-walled Upper East Side office on a cold winter afternoon. The Manhattan-based dermatologist has just returned from a weekend at Revance's headquarters in Nashville, where the pharmaceutical company hosted about 80 cosmetic dermatologists and plastic surgeons for a series of intensive seminars on Daxxify, the latest neuromodulator to receive FDA approval for the treatment of the glabella, the frequently furrowed lines between the eyebrows. In the company's clinical trials, "Daxi," as Marmur refers to it, had shown median outcomes lasting six months—sometimes up to nine months—more than twice as long as any other botulinum product on the market. As a member of Daxxify's scientific advisory board since 2018, Marmur was one of the first providers to receive the injectable, which is being marketed as "the future of aesthetics" since it began its slow rollout at the end of last year. Her enthusiasm is palpable. "We've seen so many things come and go," Marmur continues, prepping a syringe. "But really this broke through the noise."

There has been a lot of noise in the injectables space over the last 30 years. "Following Viagra, Botox is the second most recognizable pharmaceutical name in the world," says Michael Kane, MD, a Manhattan-based plastic surgeon and self-proclaimed "injectables guy." (After pilfering a vial of the original botulinum toxin from an ophthalmology colleague at Manhattan Eye, Ear, and Throat Hospital in 1991, Kane became the world's largest provider of Botox from 1991 to 2002.) Now there's also Dysport, and Xeomin, and the Seoul-born Jeuveau—all of which are designed to do the same thing: block the nerves that tell certain facial muscles to move, relaxing fine lines and wrinkles, among other benefits. Kane

has consulted on all of them, and he's been providing feedback on Daxxify—which was originally designed to transdermally deliver botulinum to the crow's-feet *through the skin*, without a needle—for 17 years. "Every formulation has its own little personality," Kane says, explaining that while each one uses different carrier and stabilizing proteins, any performance variation (faster or wider dispersion, for example) is mostly based on anecdotal evidence. "A lot of it is patient choice," Kane concedes. "There's a certain allure to newness, so if a patient is really happy with the new thing, I see no reason to switch them." The flip side is also true: The "new thing" has a less-proven track record, which can steer patients toward the older formulas they know and trust. Daxxify's defining personality just happens to be longevity, suggests Kane, the possible result of a proprietary peptide that cleaves the cell membrane and drags the large, positively charged peptide through the cell, then through the next cell, before it latches onto the negatively charged nerve terminal. According to gossip in derm circles, the FDA required Revance to test its molecule as an injectable for safety purposes, which is when they discovered that its clinical outcomes outlasted the competition, what Marmur calls its "disruptive moment."

Because Daxxify can last twice as long, a treatment with it can be twice as expensive, Marmur cautions. (A Botox injection in the glabella can run between \$375 and \$500, while Daxxify will likely be priced closer to \$700 to \$1,000.) It can also mean living with a disappointing outcome for longer. But for plenty of people, that's a risk worth taking for three more months, possibly more, of wrinkle-free skin. That benefit seemed well



SMOOTH OPERATOR

With a proprietary peptide 17 years in the making, Daxxify purports to relax fine lines and wrinkles while providing a slight eyebrow lift, too.

worth the price of admission for me as a first-timer. One of the things that has long kept me away from Botox and filler is the maintenance: I barely have time to grocery shop—how could I possibly commit to regular aesthetic appointments? But I began to observe Daxxify's promised results within 48 hours, and even more so two weeks later. There was no dramatic transformation to speak of; in fact, no one close to me mentioned any noticeable change to my appearance. But the slight smoothing effect, which presented more as an easing of tension, was perceptible—and satisfying—to me.

"The initial studies were able to show more of an eyebrow lift with a slightly new injection pattern, too," Marmur adds, administering the last of a "baby" injection above the arch of my brow. As I examine my face in a handheld mirror, waiting to see two and a half years of postpartum and pandemic stress, anxiety, and exhaustion magically disappear, Marmur gives me a tender hug. "Are you excited?" she asks again. Indeed, I reply, my smile lines growing ever deeper.

—CELIA ELLENBERG

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Vision Quest

Sasha Gordon spent her formative years painting friends and classmates. Only when she turned her paintbrush on herself did she find true perspective. By Dodie Kazanjian.

Looking at Sasha Gordon's big full-bodied paintings, it's impossible not to feel the emotion of what's happening in her life. "I'm definitely a little like Taylor Swift," she says, laughing. "If something bad happens, I need to paint it. Sometimes there's a drought—an idea drought—where I don't really have anything going on, and other times I'm super emotionally charged and manic, and I need to paint something." That something is always herself.

Like Froth, her most recent painting, is all about the breakup of her "first-ever dating experience." Gordon, who is half white, half Asian, queer, and 24, had never been in a relationship before. (The painting was recently in a group show at the Rudolph Tegnér Museum outside of Copenhagen, alongside works by more established artists like Cecily Brown, Jenna Gribbon, and Sanford Biggers.) Nude and vulnerable, the young, porcelain-skinned woman in the painting is sitting on an isolated rock in the middle of the sea. The reference is to Botticelli's *The Birth of Venus*, but the vision is pure Gordon, and there's no escaping the pain in her eyes. "I had emotions I've never dealt with before," she tells me. "It felt very necessary to paint these feelings, how upset and disappointed I was by someone I truly trusted. During the relationship, I thought a lot about how the person I was seeing was white and how that was very validating for me." She was devastated by the breakup, but she doesn't regret it. "The heartbreak really helped my work," she says. "The painting is so good."

She took a couple of months off after that and traveled with friends, going to Los Angeles and Copenhagen and London, where she got a new tattoo, a doily, on the back of her left hand. ("I just love tattoos," says Gordon, who has accumulated 20 of them.) If the two very large paintings she's just started in her Brooklyn studio are any indication of what she's feeling right now, she's in a good place. In the one she began yesterday, she's a cat. ("I'm not a cat person," she admits. She's very attached to Boba, her shih tzu poodle.) In the other, she's a living topiary, body and head entirely covered with green leaves instead of skin, but so far, only the head has been painted in leaf. Other smaller works are in progress, taped to the wall.

Gordon's self-portraits have a secret alchemy that sets them off from the current avalanche of figurative art rooted in identity politics. Her main ingredient is oil paint, never acrylic—building up through many layers to a lush translucency. She digs deep, and then goes deeper, pulling what's inside her out, confronting the

not-always-easy experience of growing up as the daughter of a Polish American Jewish father and a Korean mother in the very white town of Somers, in Westchester County, New York. Her work is a raw, fearless self-exposé, not so much for us to see, but for herself. She's painting because she has to.

Gordon has been showing her often-larger-than-life paintings in galleries and art fairs since she was in her third year at the Rhode Island School of Design (RISD). Last spring, Jeffrey Deitch gave Gordon her first solo show in New York, called "Hands of Others." In seven riveting paintings, her face and her ample nude body

appeared in a variety of strange situations. *My Friend Will Be Me* shows her as a purple monolith, sitting at the easel, painting but also smiling as she looks straight at us. The image makes you uncomfortable, but you can't forget it. In *Pinky Promise*, there are two of her, mint green this time, standing side by side in the woods with pinkies and nipples touching. Deitch also included her *Mood Ring*, a six-by-five-foot painting of her mysterious round face in "Wonder Women," a group show curated by Kathy Huang at his Los Angeles gallery. "It's very rare that somebody still in art school is so accomplished, with such a distinctive vision," he says.

Her debut solo museum show will open at the Institute of Contemporary Art, Miami, in December, when the international art world will be there for the next Miami Beach Art Basel fair. How does she feel about all this early art world recognition? "I like a lot of the things that come with success, but it's really scary," she admits. "I'm from a

small town where no one paid attention to me. Now I have impostor syndrome all the time. Like why am I here? People come up to me and tell me I'm their role model. I'm just painting. I'm changing someone's life? It's so weird."

All kids make art in kindergarten, but Sasha knew even then that art was what she wanted to do. Her mother, who was born in Seoul, South Korea, and lived there until she was 18, encouraged this. She herself drew beautifully—her delicate, small graphite still lifes of plants and pine cones and other objects from nature hung throughout the house—and she set up a permanent table with crayons >132

WATER WORKS

ABOVE: Gordon's *Seductress*, 2021. OPPOSITE: Gordon in her studio, photographed by Sophie Schwartz.



and colored pencils and paper for Sasha when she was only four. Gordon's brother, Alex, who is a year and a half older, was more like their ophthalmologist dad—he liked reading and math and science, and he's now in medical school. In tiny Somers, where most of their classmates were white and Catholic, the Gordon kids were bullied for being different. "I don't think I'm religious in any way, but I'd say that I'm culturally very Jewish," Gordon says, giggling. (Neither her mom, who is Buddhist, nor her father is "super-religious," either.) "It's like *Curb Your Enthusiasm* in real life." On top of this, she grew up thinking there was something wrong with her body. She has written about growing up as "a larger person" in a social environment where the women around her and in the media were thin and white.

In high school, she drew portraits of her classmates. "I thought my facial features were not as interesting as white faces," she tells me. "They had so much more dimension than mine does. But as soon as the school's art show would happen, I'd be the star. It would give me confidence—for one day." Most of the time, she felt isolated, and she suffered from intense anxiety and obsessive compulsive disorder, which wasn't diagnosed until later. In grade school, she took tennis lessons (she was on the high school team), and also violin and piano. She loved music and sometimes imagined what it would be like to have a career in music instead of art. She gravitated toward violin, but in high school, she quit the school orchestra "because I thought it was kind of dorky and stereotypical for an Asian girl to be in orchestra." She took private lessons because she didn't want anyone at school to know. Her focus on art never wavered. But because the art history books showed mostly white Eurocentric people, she felt it wasn't possible for her art to be successful.

When she entered RISD in 2016, she was depressed and wanted to assimilate, which meant holding on to the white side of herself. But at RISD, she was recognized—teachers and other students loved her work, which they had followed on Instagram. This made her think, Oh, damn, I was really in a racist community. How did I not see these things? She made one painting in her freshman year called *The Bath*, which was unlike anything she had done before. It was an awakening. More than eight feet wide and astonishingly complex, it shows a number of nude women, some Asian, some white, in a Korean bathhouse. The yellow Asian figure on the left is Gordon. "This was the first painting I did about my Asian identity," she tells me. "I wanted to show the discomfort I feel around white people, so I added pink blowup, doll-like figures invading the bathhouse, which I felt was a safe space." Gordon had never been in a Korean bathhouse at that point, but her mother had talked about the experience, and after Gordon did the painting, her mother took her to one in New Jersey. "It was really comforting to be nude with all these other Asian women." The painting now hangs in her parents' dining room in Somers.

Gordon realized at this point that her real subject was herself. Instead of obsessively painting hyperrealistic portraits of her white classmates, she simplified her technique and started to explore the complexities of who she was. It helped that RISD offered students free therapy for mental health issues. "In Asian families, you don't talk about your feelings," she says. "At RISD, everything was spoken about." She began seeing a therapist. "My mom called me after seeing a video of Lady Gaga talking to Oprah Winfrey about her mental illness journey," Gordon says. "She said, 'I'm so sorry I never took you seriously.' I thought it was so funny that it took Lady Gaga for my mom to get it." And of course, all these things she was learning about herself fed her paintings.

A junior-year semester in Rome, amid all that classical architecture, opened her up to new opportunities. It gave her a sense of freedom she'd never had before—she started to play, to do whatever she wanted. "I began using color in a different way," she remembers. "I really loved the color in Italy, all those terra-cotta buildings. I was trying to find ways to express light, and using a lot of very translucent colors.... I started to experiment more with expressions, like smiling, aggressively smiling, anger, and sobbing." She sees her self-portraits as different characters. This makes me think of Cindy Sherman, and when I ask her what she wants her paintings to look like, she says, "Like a film still, almost."

Matthew Brown, the 27-year-old wunderkind and Los Angeles gallerist, put Gordon in a group show in December 2019, while she was still at RISD, and opened his second and more impressive LA gallery a year later with 16 new works by Gordon. It was her first solo show, and critics took note. "Reimagining scenes from her childhood, Sasha Gordon creates

vibrant worlds brimming with quotidian details incongruous with memory's elusive nature," *Art in America*'s Harley Wong wrote.

A week has passed, and I'm back in her studio. The cat painting hasn't changed. *Sasha the Cat* is still an under-painting, crouching on elbows and knees and playing with a piece of yarn that she looks at mischievously. "I'm still trying to figure out if I should give her cat ears," she says. "I have to be careful with this, because I don't want it to look like *Cats* the movie or the musical. She'll definitely have fur. I want her to be like an orange tabby cat on a Persian rug." A much bigger version of herself is sketched in behind *Sasha the Cat*. Normally, the figure in the background would be smaller, but Gordon, taking liberties with scale, has made it much larger, throwing off the proportions and unsettling the viewer.

The painting of *Sasha* as *Topiary* now has one arm and part of her chest in leaf, as well as her head. There's a doppelgänger in this one, too, nude of course, holding a

CONTINUED ON PAGE 230



BLUE PHASE
Gordon's *My Friend Will Be Me*, 2022.



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Magnificent Obsession

In Mumbai, a monumental fashion exhibition charts the crosscurrents of cultural influence.



Beginning in the 17th century and continuing to this day, India's impact on Western fashion has been a complicated and layered history of admiration, appropriation, exploitation, and celebration." So writes Hamish Bowles, *Vogue*'s global editor at large and the editor in chief of *The World of Interiors*, in *India in Fashion*, a lavish new book due this spring from Rizzoli, which he edited and contributed to alongside writers including Suzy Menkes, Priyanka R. Khanna, Avalon Fotheringham, and Alia Allana. "The treasury of India's sartorial and textile traditions have provided inspiration that led to imitation at the court of Louis XVI and the couturiers of Jazz Age Paris, the sportswear designers of midcentury America, and the hippies of the Summer of Love," he continues. Yet for all of that cultural cross-pollination, the role that Indian arts and crafts have played in shaping global aesthetics has not always received its due.

With examples ranging from Mughal Empire watercolors to Saint Laurent runway ensembles, *India in Fashion* is functionally a catalog for an exhibition of the same name, opening next month in Mumbai.



But it is also a powerful adjustment of the lens through which Indian influence is sometimes seen: Curated by Bowles and designed by Patrick Kinmonth and architect Rooshad Shroff, the show tells an elaborate story of beauty and influence, spanning hundreds of years and thousands of miles. "We're trying to trace something that is about imagination, creativity, and beauty, and how it's taken up in different cultures," explains Kinmonth.

"India in Fashion" will completely transform an expansive hall inside the brand-new Nita Mukesh Ambani Cultural Centre, devised as a world-class setting for the performing and visual arts. (A contemporary art exhibit, cocurated by gallerist Jeffrey Deitch and cultural theorist Ranjit Hoskote, and a performance conceived by director and playwright Feroz Abbas Khan will also help to inaugurate the NMACC.) "It's a huge volume of space," says Shroff, who is based in Mumbai; the scale allows for something "quite grand in terms of the architectural language," he continues. Indeed, among the visual references for the show's layout were London's Great Exhibition of 1851 and the mesmerizing geometries of Indian stepwells.

Between "India in Fashion" and the NMACC at large, Indian creativity is being platformed in a virtually unprecedented way. "In spite of the history and lineage of the country, it still sometimes seems quite nascent in terms of the appreciation of the arts," Shroff says. "With this center, I think we really want to bring about much more of an awareness of design, of art, of culture." As Kinmonth describes one compelling dynamic in "India in Fashion": "The inspiration comes, and then it's interpreted, then it travels back to India, and then new generations of both Indian designers and Western designers get reinspired. It's a fascinating mechanism, altogether." —MARLEY MARIUS

FROM INDIA, WITH LOVE

Antique textiles provide the backdrop for looks from Anamika Khanna (LEFT) and a layered ensemble from Raw Mango and House of Urrmi (ABOVE), contemporary Indian fashion houses.

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Heaven Scent

When Thierry Mugler launched Angel in 1992, the iconic fragrance broke all the rules. Thirty years later, an updated formula arrives for a new generation.

On a rainy November night last fall, the Brooklyn Museum celebrated the American opening of “Thierry Mugler: Couturissime,” the first retrospective to celebrate the idiosyncratic world of the late French couturier. Marc Jacobs posed with Laverne Cox, Mugler muses Stella Ellis and Connie Fleming paraded the exhibition halls, and Casey Cadwallader—the house’s current creative director—escorted Kylie Jenner, who wore a waist-snatching corseted black gown from Mugler’s fall 1995 couture collection. A familiar smell wafted through the crowd, growing stronger as you approached the center of the exhibition, where the designer’s olfactory achievements, most notably his 1992 triumph, Angel, were on view: Even encased in glass, the iconic—and polarizing—eau de parfum that forever changed the fragrance world made itself known.

To have lived through the ’90s is to know Angel’s cloying, unmistakable trail, which smelled nothing like the decade’s more ubiquitous aquatic offerings, fruity florals, and room-clearing ’80s-era holdovers. “Angel broke all the rules,” Cadwallader says of the synthesized praline, cotton candy, and red berry concoction

WINGS OF DESIRE

LEFT: Model Edie Campbell wears Mugler’s archival Venus dress from fall 1995. Photographed by Ethan James Green for *Vogue*, 2019. BELOW: A celestial look from fall 1984.

that created an entirely new category. Dubbed the first “gourmand” fragrance, the collaboration with perfumer Olivier Cresp was also heavy on patchouli, making it at once sensual and saccharine. This month, the house of Mugler will debut Angel Elixir, a modern riff on the original that aims to broaden its appeal while staying true to a hyper-performative DNA dotted with queer nightlife characters and a fetishized femininity.

Elixir doesn’t totally abandon the original Angel, insists Hunter Schafer, the face of the new scent. “I think of them as sisters,” elaborates the 24-year-old *Euphoria* star. “Hunter checks so many different boxes on so many levels,” Cadwallader says of Schafer’s range, which makes her the perfect bridge between the original “otherworldly, godlike” Angel muses, including models Jerry Hall and Amy Wesson, and the newer authenticity-first generation. “My demeanor changes,” Schafer says of spritzing on Elixir, comparing its infusions of sandalwood and a natural jasmine extract—both noticeably absent from the original—to wearing a pair of heels, or having a fresh set of nails.

At 27, I have both a vivid memory of the old Angel and a Gen Z affinity with the spirit of the new version, so I wore both to the *Vogue* office, on alternating days, to compare them. While the original eau de parfum stoked nostalgia, especially among our senior editors (and the occasional lingering subway rider), it also smelled “a little ladylike,” according to a young colleague. Elixir, meanwhile, was the favorite with an even younger colleague. It smells “woody,” she said; and “not like it’s meant to be a female fragrance.” (That last bit is intentional, says Cadwallader. “It has this feistiness that is past being gender-specific.”)

Before he died last year at the age of 73, Mugler had a chance to smell the new fragrance in its early incarnation. “It was very emotional,” reveals perfumer Domitille Michalon-Bertier, who co-created the formula with Anne Flipo, of the designer’s encouraging reaction to the updated blend, which arrives in a dark blue version of the original five-pointed-star flacon. Mugler’s instincts seem to hold as much weight today as they did 30 years ago. “For us, beauty is not a singular thing that fashion decides and we regurgitate,” Cadwallader says of the house’s legacy, which extends to its signature scent. “It’s something we search out. And once you spray Elixir, you are Mugler.”—JOSÉ CRIALES-UNZUETA





ALBERTA FERRETTI

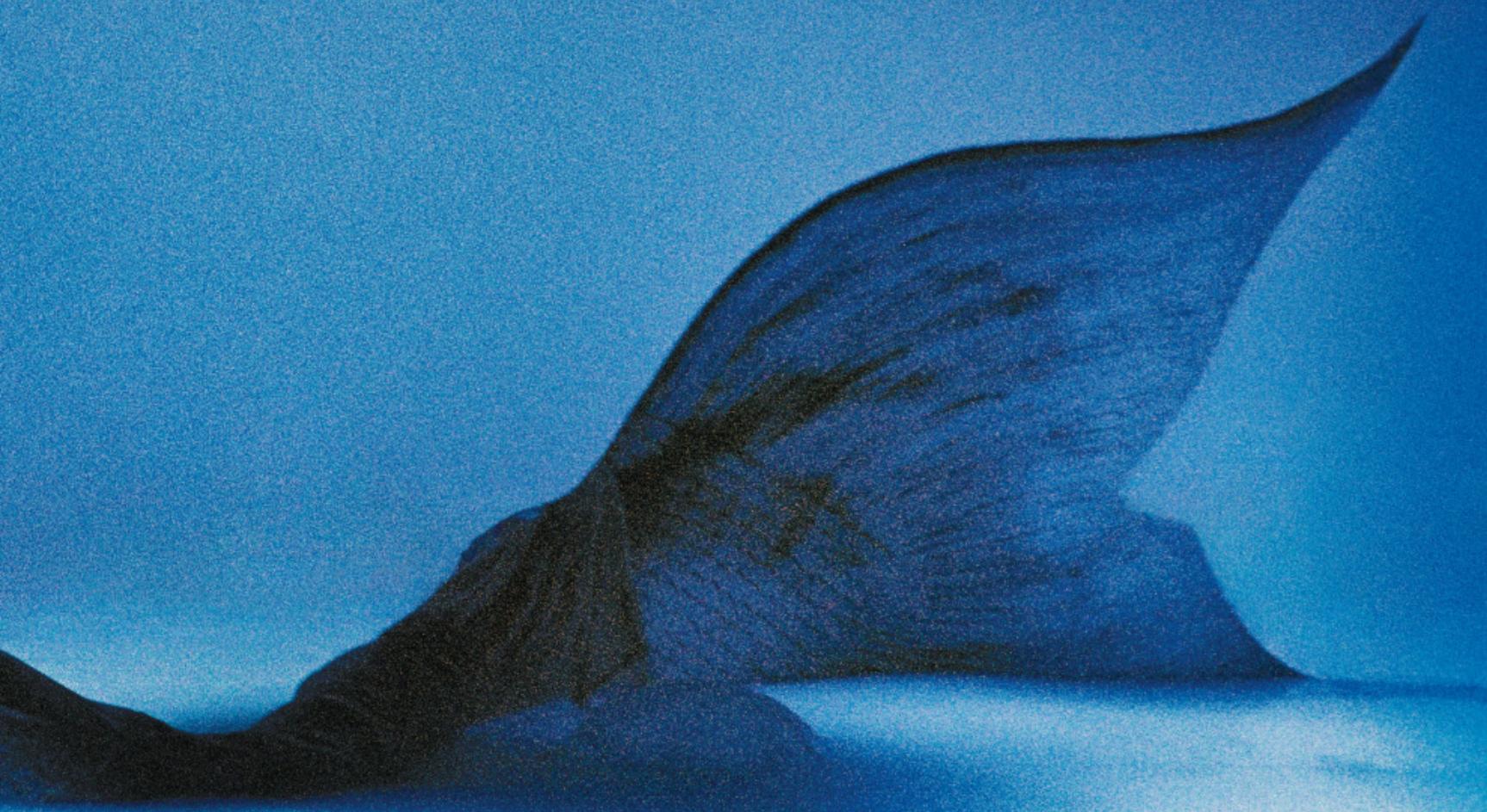


The background of the image is a dark, moody landscape. A bright, horizontal band of light, possibly from a sunset or sunrise, cuts across the middle of the frame. Below this light band, the silhouette of a forest or large bushes is visible against the dark sky. The overall atmosphere is somber and dramatic.

FABIANA FILIPPI







Blumarine



Into the Mystic

The neo-soul icon Erykah Badu has long made spiritual, theatrical, ethereal style her calling card. Finally, fashion has caught up with her.
By Chioma Nnadi. Photographed by Jamie Hawkesworth.

THE WAY OF WATER

"I feel I've poked this hole in the dam...and all this water is seeping through," says four-time Grammy winner Badu, 51, of her influence. *Maison Margiela Artisanal* designed by John Galliano coat. *Hailey Desjardins* custom hat inspired by Issey Miyake.

Fashion Editor:
Alex Harrington.



PETAL POWER

"To me this moment feels like her re-blossoming," says Koryan, sister to Badu. Hermès dress. Hailey Desjardins custom hat inspired by Issey Miyake.





BLANKET STATEMENT

"With Erykah, it's a completely new world," says Francesco Risso of Marni, who has collaborated with the singer on a capsule collection. *Marni x Erykah Badu* dress and shawl.





LIKE MOTHER, LIKE DAUGHTER

"Puma is a very giving person," Badu says of her 18-year-old daughter (NEAR LEFT). "I really like the lady she's becoming." Badu wears an R13 T-shirt. Puma Curry wears a Banana Republic T-shirt.

Motherhood might be the thing that comes most naturally to Badu. While her male musician friends were busy scoping the audience for groupies, she was looking out for babysitters

Erykah Badu likes to wear clothes that make music when she walks—it's why today she has strings of bells strapped to her ankles. She also has a tangle of amethyst crystal pendants thrown over her paint-splattered overalls, gigantic silver rings on each finger, rubber bangles stacked up to her elbows, and a red beanie pulled over her hair. Standing on the porch of her South Dallas childhood home, a modest white clapboard house where her mother still lives, she's serving a look that's part shamanic priestess, part artist at work. This is a Tuesday in mid-December and the area has been under a tornado watch all morning, unusual for this time of year. But now the clouds have parted, and the normal sounds—birds, traffic—of the tree-lined neighborhood are filtering in. "I grew up listening to these trucks and cars pass by," she says, motioning toward the freeway, her tiny flip-flop-shod feet jingling as she approaches the door. "The vibration is familiar, soothing, like wind chimes."

The door opens and out bounds the welcoming committee: an excitable snow white Malt-Tzu. "Hi, Tyrone," she purrs, petting the puppy, named after Badu's most enduring single from 1997, a hilarious freestyle about a deadbeat boyfriend. Badu's mother is Kolleen, goes by Queenie. "Once you meet her, y'all are going to forget all about me," the 51-year-old Badu says. In other words, if you want to know where Badu got her trademark irreverence, her mischievous wit, it's best to come here and call on Queenie.

Born Erica Abi Wright, Badu was raised by a circle of women—Queenie (who'd separated from Badu's father when Badu was a girl), and also her grandmothers Thelma Gipson and Viola Wilson, and godmother Gwen Hargrove. They were all educators and caregivers by trade who used humor to navigate life's ups and downs. "I thought Richard Pryor was my daddy for a long time," Badu deadpans. "It's the only male voice I heard in the house." The family has lived in Dallas for decades, and it was in this near-100-year-old home that the singer-songwriter picked up her ear for music: Chaka Khan, Pink



Floyd, Phoebe Snow, Prince, and Rick James. All were a running soundtrack for game nights and birthday parties. "It was a little-girl factory," Badu remembers.

Today the place is relatively quiet—her younger brother, Eevin, and younger sister, Koryan, have yet to arrive—and Queenie is holding court. "My mother was the historian, she kept every article," Queenie tells me, referring to her mother, Thelma, who passed away in 2020 at the age of 93. "Every day she would cut out clippings and paste them into different frames." Several of those lovingly assembled collages of Badu memorabilia hang on the rose-colored walls alongside family photographs, including pictures of Badu's three children: Seven, 25, the son she shares with OutKast member André 3000; Puma, 18, her daughter by rapper The D.O.C.; and daughter Mars, 14, whose father is the hip-hop artist-producer Jay Electronica. There's also a sizable portrait of Queenie herself, resplendent with her Cleopatra-style honey blond bob.

She's recalling the surprise of Badu's first appearance in the newspaper: a street style picture of her 14-year-old in the lifestyle section of the *Dallas Morning News*. Badu was an avid theater kid then, and amateur dancer, and was dressed for the photographer in pajamas rolled at the waist and a men's suit jacket. (Badu would have her first real headline-making moment in 1994—a solo deal with Universal Records—after she opened a D'Angelo show in Fort Worth with her cousin Robert Bradford as a hip-hop duo named Erykah Free.) "I mean, if you saw her then you might have thought she found her clothes rummaging through a donation bin in the church basement," says Queenie. "She dressed outrageously. And she had this high-top fade." In Queenie you can see Badu's meticulous approach to self-presentation, in her black leggings and striped shirt accessorized with chunky tortoiseshell glasses and a necklace of amber and turquoise stones. "I know now that it was her style," Queenie says. "She always was a trendsetter."

From the moment Badu floated onto the scene with her genre-defining 1997 album *Baduizm*, the iconoclastic star has made personal style a radical calling card. In that era, standing tall on platform shoes with a towering headwrap, signature ankh jewelry, and a smoldering incense stick between her fingertips, she projected a powerful, mystical image of Black beauty. Even then she was an old soul who seemed cosmically aligned with the future, with a

haunting, blues-inflected voice often compared to Billie Holiday's. The sound itself, a hybrid of hip-hop, soul, jazz, and funk dubbed "neo-soul" (see also D'Angelo, Jill Scott, Lauryn Hill, and Maxwell) offered a countermovement to the commercial R&B of the time, one that was both soulful and socially conscious.

Longtime friend and collaborator, the DJ and producer Questlove, was spellbound by Badu at the 1996 Soul Train Awards in Los Angeles. "She had on the tallest turban I've ever seen in my life," he says. "It was like she was hiding a three-year-old standing on her head, that's how tall her headwrap was. I was just transfixed." As she tells it, the look was as meaningful as the music. "I remember being among an elite group of young people who were really embracing what it

meant to be an African here, generationally," Badu says. "We embraced locs and 'fros and our natural state, our fabrics and jewelry. It was a beautiful time." Several years later, in 2008, she would help popularize the phrase "stay woke" with "Master Teacher," a song on her fourth studio album, *New Amerykah Part One*, long before it was deployed by young progressives (and then co-opted derisively by conservatives). Badu talks of her enduring influence in philosophical, sometimes esoteric, terms. "I feel I've poked this hole in the dam. It's this little hole and all this water is seeping through. Now all the people who have the same energy are able to experience what I experience," she says. "It's a rebirthing process, and I feel like I'm a midwife."

Badu herself is in the midst of a renaissance. Like David Bowie and Grace Jones before her, the four-time Grammy-winning singer is one of those rare, rabble-rousing creatures who orbits the pop-cultural universe and meets

the moment entirely on her own terms. Her imagination and joy feel especially relevant now. She's found new ways to connect, sharing radiant backstage videos on TikTok and Instagram, where she's a self-described "UNICORN Mutant Cobra," and engages in lively conversation in the comments. If you're familiar with her Twitter alias, @fatbellybella, then you'll know she's pretty good at giving relationship advice, too. Her musical collaborators cross genres and generations, from hip-hop (A\$AP Ferg) to K-pop (RM of BTS) to new-wave R&B (Teyana Taylor).

"One thing I brag about all the time is that my sister is probably the only artist I know who easily sells out arenas despite not having put out an album in almost a decade," says sibling Koryan, or Koko for short. "And to me this moment feels like her re-blossoming." Koko once sang backup for Badu's band but these days acts as her sister's right hand. "Her left hand *and* right hand," says Queenie, cackling. "And whatever hand that feeds her!" With a trucker hat pulled over striking waist-length platinum-blond braids, Koko carries herself like a woman who means business. Badu's turning point, she explains, came when the pandemic brought touring to a



KNIT GIRL

"We embraced locs and 'fros and our natural state, our fabrics and jewelry. It was a beautiful time," Badu says of the mid-'90s neo-soul scene. ABOVE: Badu and her daughter Puma wear Prada. OPPOSITE: Yohji Yamamoto dress and hat.

halt. The pivot was swift and effective: the launch of Badubotron, a streaming platform hosting concerts from Badu's home that could be viewed for the nominal fee of \$1. These attracted more than a hundred thousand fans enamored of Badu's elaborate costumes, wild performances, and otherworldly DIY sets. In one of her shows, Badu and her band appeared to perform inside huge inflatable bubbles. Badu World Market, the singer's popular online merch store, also went live. "We just kind of came together as a family and it was like, Oh, we actually have a company *right here*," says Koko, whose son, Malcolm, and daughter, Diamond, also work for brand Badu. "Everyone stepped up."

The latest member of the family to join the team is Badu's daughter Puma, who seems the most likely to carry on the Badu mantle. Listen to her covering her mother's songs on TikTok with your eyes closed, and it's almost impossible to tell their voices apart. In person she's shy and soft spoken, dressed in a distressed oversized black-and-white sweater with spiral curls peeking out of her bonnet and framing her face. She and boyfriend Sean have been serving as Badu's personal assistants for a little over a year, which means, among other things, ensuring Badu has the 15 to 20 trunks of clothing and accessories she needs on tour. "I don't know how other family workplace dynamics go," Puma says, "but it's like a real job, and I have to buckle down and do what I need to do or else word is going to get to the CEO and I'm not going to get paid. You know what I mean?"

Badu isn't the office-dwelling type, but for the past year and a half she has kept a creative working space on the other side of town, just a few minutes' drive away from the lakefront ranch she's lived in for the past 25 years (and which is currently under renovation). From the outside, the modern loft-style house is hardly the bohemian retreat I'd imagined—though Badu's dove-gray Porsche is parked in the driveway with the license plate SHE ILL.

Inside, it's a veritable Aladdin's cave of tchotchkies and objets d'art, with Buddha statues lining the staircase, African masks hanging on the walls, and Indian marigold garlands strung in the windows. Badu greets me at the door in a dramatic silk Libertine caftan printed with amusing pictures of monkeys in space suits and leads me past her recording studio to the living area, where two larger-than-life Malian brass busts have glowing sticks of incense sprouting from their heads. The fireplace casts shadows on vintage furniture, including a throne-like peacock love seat and a retro-futurist egg pod chair. In the corner, an upright piano is buttressed by a stack of vintage Louis Vuitton trunks. "Alexa, play wind chimes," says Badu, setting the mood.

I can't help but ask if Badu keeps any of her legendary wardrobe here—and this prompts a tour. We begin in the kitchen with a zippered black Junya Watanabe Commes des Garçons biker jacket casually draped over a barstool with the tags still on. "I can't decide whether to keep it or not," she says, smiling coyly, even though the conceptual curved shoulder looks as easy as a slouchy cardigan on her—it's a no-brainer. I'm reminded of how the fashion world seems to be catching up to Badu: Her counterintuitive approach to layering amid extreme proportions, her magpie eye for vintage, and the impulse to upcycle or customize just about everything she wears feels in step with our current moment. "The first thing you always

see is her, and then it's like, *Oh, my God, that's what she has on!*" says her friend Thom Browne who has dressed her for several occasions, including the Met Gala in 2021. "It's just that aura of true individuality, true greatness, and superstardom."

It was only last September that Badu took to the global Fashion Week circuit in a real way. At Vogue World in New York, she made her runway debut in a plaid ERL suit layered over a Bode tunic, her neck dripping in her own eclectic jewelry. At the Tom Ford show a couple of nights later, she accessorized a pair of his glitzy rhinestone Aladdin pants with a faux-fur headdress. Then, after a pit stop in London for Burberry, and in Milan for Bottega Veneta, she pulled out a dazzling array of outfits for Thom Browne, Rick Owens, and Off-White in Paris. She ended her circuit at Valentino, where she reinvented the Italian brand's popular Barbie pink, deftly pulling a hoodie up from under her marabou-feathered coat and piling on a gigantic hat.

To hear her tell it, Badu only really came to understand the world of fashion late in her career. "I didn't know all the houses and names of designers until I was in my 30s or 40s," she says. "What I had was a good understanding of look and shape, the way I did with paper dolls when I was a child." She rarely works with a stylist, does her own hair and makeup on the road, and still loves the thrill of the hunt when trawling local vintage stores. "For me, it's about seeing things coming together, like making a cake from beginning to end," she says.

Marni's creative director Francesco Risso found himself mesmerized by her process as he put the finishing touches on the capsule collection made in partnership with the singer. "I've worked with celebrities in the past, and there are times that you struggle with them because it's so much about the body, or how it looks in a picture. With Erykah, it's a completely new world," says Risso, recalling the moment he found her in a hotel room in London experimenting with the first

samples. "I was blown away seeing her playing with clothes, just jumbling everything up. It's just so innate. With her, it's not just about making music. She's iconic because what comes with her is a lifestyle, it's a complete world."

It all began when Risso, who'd long admired Badu from afar, invited the singer to be his date at the Met Gala last year. The outfit he made for her was a glorious Technicolor dreamcoat, a throwback to a patchwork dress that Badu designed herself and wore to the Grammys in 1999. The updated version was comprised of hundreds of swatches of fabrics from the Marni archives, and proved to be the perfect springboard for their collaboration.

Settled into a pile of floor cushions in her meditation room and flicking through a look book on her iPad, Badu describes the Marni collection as something of an audiovisual experience, what she calls "mystical instrumental wear." She zooms in on a pair of gold leather boots to better show me the little gold bells that are studded on from ankle to knee. On a matching gold leather handbag, the same hardware has a tambourine effect. Even the party dresses in the collection come embellished with jumbo sequins that rustle while you walk. "A lot of this stuff has stories," says Badu. "The high hats, of course, the towering thoughts." She pauses on a particularly arresting outfit on the screen: a belted patchwork leather trench worn with a matching knit topper that was inspired by one she was made to wear for an educational YouTube skit before she was famous. "The funny thing is I embraced the hat and made

CONTINUED ON PAGE 230



**EDGE OF
TOMORROW**

Badu wears a Loewe sweatshirt. Yohji Yamamoto hat. Balenciaga shoes. In this story: hair, Jawara; makeup, Melanesia Hunter. Details, see In This Issue.



Maximum City

Seoul is tomorrowland, teeming with models, actors, activists, and musicians who are breaking molds and leaning into what's now and what's next. Monica Kim takes stock of a brave new world. Photographed by Cho Gi-Seok.

ON THE HORIZON

At Changgyeong Palace—erected by the exalted King Sejong in the mid-15th century—model Yoon Young Bae looks out over northern Seoul in a densely ruffled Simone Rocha jacket, skirt (simonerocha.com), veil, and shoes. Fashion Editor: Kate Phelan.



NEXT STOP

Stepping lightly through
Yeoksam Station
in dynamic Gangnam,
model Chloe Oh cuts
a very sharp figure in a
Prada coat, pants,
and shoes; prada.com.

**EVERYTHING'S
COMING UP ROSES**

Framed by the splendid
interiors of the Korea
Furniture Museum,
Bae pumps up the
volume in a sculptural
Richard Quinn dress;
richardquinn.com.





What is it about Seoul that has the world in its thrall? I have fielded this question so often of late, tossed it back and forth, particularly with Koreans, as puzzled as I am by the sudden fervor. The Seoul of the '90s that I knew as a child—as an American girl growing up in the Midwest, my mother taking me twice a year to the country of her birth—was rooted in smallness. Seoul was the pack of yogurt drink left swinging on my grandmother's front door, the windowless market where we'd buy sticky rice cakes, the underground hall where fake Chanel wallets tumbled from black garbage bags like stone fruit from trees. It felt like a stunted city yearning for sophistication. My American classmates could not place it on a map. "Is it like Beijing? Tokyo?" they would ask. "North or South Korea?"

As I entered my teens, I began to dread the prospect of flying 14 hours for dull department store lunches and walks along an ever-gray river. I craved the worldliness of New York, or Paris, or Tokyo, and wanted to own a real Chanel wallet instead of a convincing fake. Immature, I thought that Seoul lacked *savoir vivre*, and said so to my mother, who acquiesced and we ceased our yearly visits. The city faded from my view.

When I returned in the 2010s, I didn't recognize what I saw. Young men and women roved along picturesque avenues, sharply dressed in Vetements, eyes fixed on smartphones. I revisited old haunts, relishing the visual feast—and when I started working as an editor for US *Vogue*, I covered Seoul's emerging designers and cultural figures. I noticed my fellow editors following Korean fashion labels, my friends streaming my mother's favorite Korean soap operas. One winter, in the West Village, a blond woman

in yoga pants tapped my shoulder in the checkout line at a posh butcher's shop on Hudson Street, pointing at the jar of kimchi in my hand. "You know that's spicy, right?" Seoul had officially become cool.

The stunning flash of photographs that spill across these pages speaks to *Vogue's* fascination with the pace of Seoul's transformation: in fashion, beauty, music, film, art, and technology. I can attest to all of it. Three years ago, I moved to Seoul full-time for work, and though I was accustomed to Manhattan's long hours, the city quickly consumed me. My colleagues feverishly clocked 20-hour shifts, accomplishing impossible tasks five times a day, and there was barely time to sleep. Seoul

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HEART AND SEOUL

Another glimpse of Changgyeong Palace in historic Jongno, with sweeping views of more recent developments to the east.

MODERN LOVE

As Cho Gi-Seok pays homage to his own photograph in *Dazed Korea* last year, Soo Yeon wears a **Boss** jacket and pants; hugoboss.com. Hyung Joon wears a **Dolce & Gabbana** trench coat and jumpsuit; dolcegabbana.com.



WINDOW DRESSING

An almost celestial vision
in her many-pleated
Junya Watanabe dress
([shop.doverstreetmarket
.com](http://shop.doverstreetmarket.com)), model Britney
Kim conjures the Winged
Victory of Samothrace
in one of the Korea
Furniture Museum's
light-flooded rooms.





BRIGHT LIGHTS,
BIG CITY

Producer Code Kunst
is on the vanguard of
Seoul's music scene.
He surveys the
thronging Jonggak
Station intersection
in a Gucci jacket:
gucci.com.

BREAKING COVER

At Changgyeong Palace, Bae peeks out from the romantic abundance of her *Simone Rocha* jacket ([simone rocha.com](http://simonerocha.com)) and veil.

BEAUTY NOTE

Metallic is the moment. MAC Cosmetics Pigment in Old Gold layered with its Lipglass in Clear reimagines the statement lip.





FRINGE BENEFITS

Even as the traditional Korean houses, or hanoks, that contain the Korea Furniture Museum's vast collection let viewers imagine how pieces existed in situ, Oh's graphically printed, stunningly textured **Bottega Veneta** dress (bottegaveneta.com) feels rooted purely in the here and now.





was an engine running at unfathomable speed, exhausting and exhilarating. Yet that momentum has given birth to a new school of iconoclasm: artists and actors, models and singers, who were shaped and driven by the pressure, but have also broken with it—finding ways to stand out, express who they are, and cut against the sheen of glossy perfectionism that has defined Korean pop culture in the past.

The personalities in these images represent a new stage of evolution. Take Balmung Tiger: an alternative and fully independent K-pop collective that is set apart by its diverse roster of 11 multifaceted young artists; or Jungle, an activist who last summer launched Transparent, a party series to celebrate and uplift transgender people. Beloved actress Doona Bae, who has staunchly pursued her craft for more than two decades, has become a role model for young actors who eschew the overt trappings of superstardom; so has producer Code Kunst, whose lack of pretension and quiet passion for composition have made him an unlikely heartthrob.

Even NewJeans, the chart-burning idol girl group that debuted last summer, are singular in that they emerge from a label with a female CEO, Min Hee Jin, a rarity in the industry. With NewJeans, there are no corsets or ball gowns, no overbleached extensions or stiletto nails. Just five high school-aged girls playing themselves, with black, hip-length hair, singing and dancing to '90s-style teen pop with exuberant smiles. As NewJeans's Hanni tells me, the label's goal was authenticity. "Because at the end of the day, we're the ones standing onstage." "It's such an honor to be able to express ourselves," adds her co-idol Danielle. Small steps toward progress can feel the most profound. □

GOING SIDEWAYS

As striking in color as it is in silhouette, Bae's **Alexander McQueen** dress (alexandermcqueen.com) can't help but make an already sumptuous setting even more special.

BEAUTY NOTE

Think pink. Chantecaille's limited edition Wild Meadows Eye Quartet features a fresh, rosy shadow for an unexpected spin on smoky.

SURROUND SOUND

Model and singer Soo Joo Park—who releases dream pop under the name Ether—faces the music in a gleaming **Alaïa** bodysuit and leggings; maison-alaiacom.com for information.



TALL ORDER

FROM TOP: Omega Sapien, Mudd the student, Chanhee Hong, Leesuh, and bj wnjn of the K-pop collective Balming Tiger, in **Prada** and **Louis Vuitton**.



JOY DIVISION

Model Gyo makes a wonderful scene in a **Rick Owens** mantle and tank top; rickowens.eu.



GOING TO TOWN

Activist and performer Jungle wanders down the Jonggak Avenue of Youth in a **Valentino** jumpsuit; [Valentino](http://valentino.com) boutiques.



FRAMING DEVICE

Known for her work with directors such as Bong Joon-ho, Park Chan-wook, and Hirokazu Koreeda—including in 2022's *Broker*—actor Doona Bae goes elegantly incognito in a Rejina Pyo trench coat; rejinapyo.com.





THE LONG VIEW

Bae wears custom wire-pearl and lace lashes designed by makeup artist Seongseok Oh and a Dior dress; by special order.

All Aflutter

The first time I got eyelash extensions was two years ago at Cils en Seine, a small, elegant space in Paris and one of the city's first studios dedicated to the service. Wanting a natural look, I asked the *esthéticienne* for a lash type with relatively relaxed *courbure*, or curvature. She looked at my downward-growing lashes—a trait shared by many Koreans—and shook her head. "You need a lot more *courbure* than you think." Much like sheet masks and snail slime serums, lash extensions—the technique of gingerly adhering false lashes to existing ones with glue—have become one of Seoul's biggest beauty exports. The extensions fall off with the natural growth cycle, or can be removed with a solvent, but most clients tend to get their lashes redone every three to four weeks in the US and Europe. In Korea, "competition is fierce," says NulByul Ha, a trendy 20-something who works at the popular ALASH boutique in western Seoul's up-and-coming Gangseo neighborhood. But it's not the local culture's dedication to near-perfect beauty standards that has caused Korean eyelash-extension studios to crop up across the globe, says Ha: "It's our use of chopsticks. It gives us manual dexterity." Hyoungyoon Park, a former assistant curator of the National Folk Museum of Korea and an expert on the history of everyday Korean artifacts, cosigns on this claim. "Korean chopsticks are very different from Chinese or Japanese ones," she says. "Ours are very thin. This is why we're very skilled with our hands. It gives Koreans an edge in certain fields, including stem cell research—and lashes." Jee-young Yoo, the manager at Tinastyle, a 22-year stalwart in Seoul's lash-extension game, has another theory. "We're early adopters," Yoo says. This checks out, confirms Soul Lee, one of New York's most sought-after lash specialists, who notes that Korean lash trends are always "two or three years ahead of the US." If you ask me, the proliferation of Korean lash enhancement is down to our *bballi bballi* (hurry, hurry) culture of impatience. "You can just get up and get ready for work without makeup," Lee says of the magic of extensions, which create a wide-eyed flutter, no mascara needed. Who doesn't want that?—EUNY HONG



HYPE GIRLS

The rising idol group NewJeans is setting the pace in K-pop. FROM LEFT: Hyein wears a **Louis Vuitton** dress; select Louis Vuitton boutiques. Hanni wears a **Münn** bodysuit; Harvey Nichols. Haerin wears a **Junya Watanabe** jacket; shop.doverstreetmarket.com. Danielle wears a **Michael Kors Collection** dress; michaelkors.com. Minji wears a **Chanel** jacket; select Chanel boutiques.





MOVING RIGHT ALONG

However you get from here to there, make like Bae and consider a little white dress and matching cardigan, all courtesy of **Fendi** (fendi.com), for your next go-go day out.

**EVERYTHING
IS EVERYTHING**

The visual vim of Oh's Louis Vuitton dress (select Louis Vuitton boutiques)—all bold tones and artfully clashing prints—calls to mind nothing so much as the heady mood of 21st-century Seoul itself.





SOMEWHERE OUT THERE

From Changgyeong Palace, the iconic Namsan Tower—a communication and observation tower built in 1969, and standing nearly 800 feet tall—is visible in the distance.



GAME STOP

At Indigo PC Room in trendy Seongsu-dong, Park enters boss mode in a Chanel cape and T-shirt; select Chanel boutiques.

EYE OF THE TIGER

Oh wears a garden-fresh
Loewe dress; loewe.com for similar styles.
In this story: hair,
Gabe Sin; makeup,
Seongseok Oh. Details,
see In This Issue.



TRIAL BY FIRE

After a barn-burning run on *Killing Eve*, Jodie Comer heads to Broadway in a piercing courtroom drama. Adam Green bears witness.
Photographed by Norman Jean Roy.

Between 2018 and 2022, Jodie Comer became a star with her virtuosic performance as the gorgeous, gleefully sociopathic assassin Villanelle on the BBC America series *Killing Eve*, winning a BAFTA and an Emmy and causing everyone to freak out about how great she was. But what she'd always wanted to do was act on the stage. As a 12-year-old in Liverpool, she won first prize at a local drama festival for a monologue about the 1989 Hillsborough Stadium disaster, and at 17 she appeared in a play called *The Price of Everything* at a theater-in-the-round in Scarborough, North Yorkshire. Still, despite continuing to audition for theatrical roles while she worked in TV and film throughout her teens and 20s, the stage remained elusive. "A lot of the feedback was great," Comer tells me over tea in New York in her unvarnished Scouse accent. (She is apartment shopping in the city when we meet, a big step after living at home with her parents and younger brother for much of the pandemic.) "But one thing that was resounding was, like, 'She hasn't been to drama school and this is too big a task for someone who isn't classically trained.' I used to feel quite defeated by that."

Not one to take "maybe" for an answer, the 29-year-old made her professional stage debut last year with *Prima Facie*, a stunning one-woman piece by Australian playwright Suzie Miller. In it, Comer gave a critically acclaimed, Evening Standard Award-winning performance as Tessa Ensler (Miller's nod to *The Vagina Monologues* author Eve Ensler, now known as V), a razor-sharp young defense lawyer whose facility in the courtroom—especially in cases dealing with sexual assault—becomes effectively meaningless when she must take the stand herself after being raped. Alienated and traumatized, she is quickly disabused of the notion that the legal games she once loved to play had anything to do with seeking justice. "She knows that she's fiercely intelligent, and she owns that," Comer says of Tessa, who is all swaggering bravado when the play begins. "She takes joy in her great power. And, of course, that makes the fall—when she's forced to face everything from the other side—even harder."

Prima Facie is now headed from the West End to Broadway's John Golden Theatre, where New York audiences will get to discover in Comer what Justin Martin, the show's director (*The Jungle*), saw from the start. "Fundamentally, she's a stage



ABOUT FACE

Jodie Comer stars this spring in *Prima Facie*, which begins previews at the John Golden Theatre on April 11. Valentino shirt. Gucci pants. The Row loafers. Cartier watch.

Fashion Editor:
Max Ortega.





animal,” he says. “She has an incredible sense of humor and an emotional rawness. She’s very, very honest and absolutely fearless. And all of that bleeds into her performance and the choices that she makes onstage. It’s a natural home for her.”

For Miller’s part, she was so persuaded by what she’d seen in *Killing Eve* that she didn’t initially realize Comer was English. When her name first came up, “I said, ‘Why would we cast a Russian actor?’” the playwright remembers with a laugh. Discovering that Comer shared the working-class background Miller had written for Tessa—who has learned to take advantage of being underestimated—moved her to the top of the list.

As research, Comer and the creative team got to spend time at the Central Criminal Court of England and Wales—more commonly known as the Old Bailey—and observe London barristers at work. (After attending law school at the University of New South Wales, Miller practiced as a human rights and criminal defense lawyer until 2010, when she shifted to playwriting full-time.) “It very much felt like theater,” Comer recalls. “Everyone was playing their

SETTING THE BAR

ABOVE: Comer wears a Max Mara blazer. Jil Sander by Lucie and Luke Meier dress.

OPPOSITE: Proenza Schouler earrings. In this story: hair, Joey George; makeup, Kiki Gifford. Details, see In This Issue.

role, everyone knew their lines, everyone knew when to come in and when not to come in. It felt presentational in that way, like acting. But the stakes were so incredibly high.” When I suggest that Tessa querying a witness might not be a far throw from Villanelle toying with a victim before swooping in for the kill, Comer says, “Absolutely. She’s like a bird with its prey. She’s having so much fun—playing around with him, making it painful. She’s like, This guy is a fucking idiot, and he has no clue what’s about to come.”

Yet the minds behind *Prima Facie* also recognize the responsibility they have, staging a 100-minute play about the many ways that a legal system devised by men can fail survivors of sexual violence. “It just felt like we would not be doing our job if we didn’t, as people left the theater, give them some way to deal with what they’ve experienced and hopefully effect some change,” says producer James Bierman.

So, the production formed a partnership with Everyone’s Invited, a digital platform where survivors can anonymously share their stories, as well as the Schools Consent Project, a charity devoted to educating teenagers about consent and sexual assault. (Based in the UK, it is due to begin operations Stateside this spring.) “If you want to watch *Prima*, and you like what *Prima* stands for, then you have to engage with this, because the two things are absolutely linked,” Bierman adds. “The play doesn’t exist in a vacuum. It exists in a world where Tessa is all too real.”

The response to the play has already been overwhelming; in Australia, where *Prima Facie* premiered in 2019, and again in England, “we just got so many messages from women,” Miller says. “Handwritten letters dropped off at the stage door, email after email, DMs...I mean, I’ve gotten hundreds a day of women saying, ‘This is what happened to me.’” In the long shadow of the #MeToo movement, she finds that now more than ever, “audiences are hungry to have conversations about systems that govern; systems around them that they don’t think are innately fair.” Happily, this isn’t just a show that talks—it’s one that absolutely roars. □





A Different Drum

Maxwell Frost, the youngest member of Congress, is marching to his own beat. By Suzy Exposito. Photographed by Annie Leibovitz.

Maxwell Frost has a stomachache. Or at least that's the charmingly unguarded reason the 26-year-old Florida congressman has given me for his tardiness. I am sitting at Orlando's oldest diner, the College Park Café, with his even younger campaign coordinator, Rayanne Anid, 23, on a gray, muggy day. It's the week between Christmas and New Year's, when most people are still hiding out in their pajamas, so we're all permitted a little leeway when it comes to punctuality.

Anid, a recent political science grad from the University of Central Florida, is telling me how she met Frost, who, when he is sworn in (a week later), will become the first Gen Z member of Congress, presiding over Florida's 10th Congressional District, which spans much of Orange County. Wedged within the metropolitan area's sprawling, byzantine network of highways is Universal

FACING FORWARD

Frost, photographed at his house in Orlando. "I'm still trying to figure it out," he says. "There are no saviors in politics."



Studios and the people who run the tourist economy surrounding it.

Anid previously managed social media for March for Our Lives—a youth-led organization established in the wake of the Parkland, Florida, shooting in 2018—and Frost worked for the group for two years. When he announced he was running for Congress in 2021, he tapped several former colleagues for his campaign; for many, it would be their first. “I was still finishing up at UCF,” says Anid about those early days on the campaign, stunned by her beginner’s luck. “We basically never slept!” Frost, I will discover, has an innate charisma and warmth; when he finds people he trusts, he tends, with a little convincing, to bring them along for the ride.

Frost finally arrives looking a little flustered but fresh in a neat blue suit. He slides into the booth and promptly orders a café con leche. I sense that the rest of the diner’s patrons have perked up at the appearance of the stately young man, whom they almost certainly recognize from the flurry of media attention he has received in recent weeks. Prior to last fall, he had never posed for a photo shoot. Now, he has done several, including the one for this article. He describes to me a surreal experience, in which a leaf blower was aimed at his face as he banged the drums in his garage, and Annie Leibovitz roared in his general direction. “It was just to amp up the vibe,” says Frost, laughing. “I kept drumming, and she kept yelling. I wasn’t sure if I was supposed to be yelling too.”

Frost pays no mind to the diners casting glances his way. Instead, he drinks his coffee and slips into a story recalling two events that galvanized him to political action in 2012: the murder of Trayvon Martin (which took place about 30 minutes from where he grew up) and the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting. As a 15-year-old Black Latino boy, rightfully shaken by the prospect of not making it home from school alive, Frost befriended members of the Newtown Action Alliance on Facebook. He was a sophomore in high school when his parents (reluctantly, he says) put him on a plane to Washington to lobby with the group. “Having young people at the table is really important,” says Frost. “March for Our Lives is about ending gun violence, but it is also about building power for and with young people.”

Maxwell Alejandro Frost was born January 17, 1997, to parents of Puerto Rican, Lebanese, and Haitian descent. He was adopted at birth by Patrick Frost, a Kansas-born musician-producer, and his wife, Maritza Argibay-Frost, a special education teacher who immigrated to the US from Cuba as a child in the 1960s. Three years after adopting Maxwell, the Frosts gave birth to his sister, María Elizabeth.

The Frost family lived in South Orlando—“straight-up suburbia,” as he describes it. Gatorland, a theme park featuring a number of crocodilians, is a local landmark. He was close to his mother’s mother, who he lovingly remembers as “Yeya,” and who had emigrated from Cuba with her daughter. Most Fridays after school, the family would drive the three-plus hours from Orlando to Hialeah, a Cuban enclave in Miami, and stay with Yeya until Sunday night. There, young Maxwell practiced Spanish, fetched his parents *cortados* from the local Cuban café and his own mango nectar. He was fully, essentially, Cubanized.

Politics was a critical part of the conversation at home. Frost describes his father

the other kids. “I’d have friends who’d say, ‘I hate my parents, I want my real mom!’” he says. “I couldn’t relate.”

In elementary school, Frost’s innate musical talent emerged. His father bought him a drum set, and by high school, Frost became a percussionist and bandleader of the award-winning salsa band Seguro Que Sí at the Osceola County School for the Arts. The band would go on to perform at a parade for President Barack Obama in Washington during his second inauguration. “That was a really big thing for me,” Frost says. “Being in DC, and performing, it kind of married everything I loved.” Frost wasn’t particularly focused on academics in school, but he did serve in student government, and even got involved at the county level.

The advocacy work continued at college, and his burgeoning career as an organizer beckoned him away from his classes. He was also devising a plan with his friends Niyah and Chris to bring a music festival to Orlando called MadSoul. “We’re like 18 years old, we have no idea what we’re talking about,” Frost tells me. “So we make a little investor deck, and we’re knocking doors and asking, ‘Can we speak to the owner?’”

Frost also did a stint at a car dealership before he began working more consistently

for campaigns across Florida—including during the 2016 presidential race, when he was part of Hillary Clinton’s staff, and in the following election, as a member of the advance team for Bernie Sanders. Eventually, he took a position as an organizer for the ACLU, where he says he sometimes worked 70-hour weeks, and helped to pass Amendment 4 in Florida, which restored voting rights to former felons. “I was always the super young guy,” he recalls.

Music was, and is, still central in his life: He lists the 1975 and Paramore as two of his favorite bands and took up seasonal work for Coachella. (He still describes his gig there in the present tense—“I’m the production dispatch; I work in the command center”—and took what he describes as a “break” last summer from his congressional campaign to work 10 very intense days at the California festival.)

Frost’s résumé is stacked with admirable positions, but they have not necessarily led to the kind of economic foundation usually required of a congressional candidate—as has been widely reported, he drove for Uber while he was running and also took



ON THE HILL

Frost in Washington outside the US Capitol.
“Having young people at the table is really important,” he says.

yelling at the TV news; Max would parrot some of these arguments at school the next day, picking fights with his classmates. His mother took him to his first political event: a rally for John Kerry. Growing up, Frost always knew he was adopted—his parents are white—but when he joined a group at his Southern Baptist church for adopted children, he didn’t feel much affinity with



on a significant amount of debt. Now, he cuts costs by renting a home with his long-term girlfriend, as well his sister, María, 22, who is an artist. “Max would come home, he’d fix us a meal, then he’d go back out and Uber until 2 a.m.,” says María of his campaign days. When he began looking for apartments in DC, it was his low income and poor credit history that in many instances disqualified him (though he was still charged for application fees). In a move of political savvy—or “just being honest,” he says—Frost took to social media to demystify the cost of assuming public office. “This ain’t meant for people who don’t already have money,” he tweeted in early December.

“The average net worth of a representative in the Florida House is like \$6 million,” says Anna V. Eskamani, who represents parts of Orlando in the Florida House of Representatives. “This is such a huge contrast from the experience of everyday people like Maxwell, who’ve struggled to find an apartment.” A progressive contemporary

IN HIS OWN TIME

Frost has been a musician since he was in grade school and has organized music festivals.

of Frost’s—albeit a member of the lower-paying state government—Eskamani says her annual salary is about \$29,000, and remaining in office requires her to take a second job. “It’s why a lot of people can’t even serve in public office,” she says. “Maxwell is such a good example of why we need more working-class people in political spaces.”

The critical moment behind Frost’s decision to run for office, however, was a personal one. In 2021, Frost finally learned the full extent of his adoption story: that his birth mother had seven other children and was unable to adequately care for him. His parents had always offered to tell him more about her, but he had declined—until one day he looked up his birth mother on Facebook. “We had one mutual friend: It was my barber,” says Frost. “He’s been cutting my hair for almost 10 years now.”

That summer, he reconnected with his birth mother for the first time over the phone, and recalls feeling an overwhelming sense of empathy for her and her struggles. He resolved to run for office to support more people like her. “We haven’t met in person yet,” he says. “I’m trying to take it slow.”

When we are done eating, I follow Frost through Orlando’s freeway labyrinth in my rental car, back to his parents’ home. Outside the house, an inflatable corgi dressed up as Santa Claus sits in the yard, and inside, a live Chihuahua mix named Roxy holds court in the foyer. There, the Frost family also keeps a collection of knickknacks, old photos, and stacks of ’60s- and ’70s-era vinyl jazz records piled against the walls. (Frost’s father now runs an online record shop.)

I meet Frost’s mom, Maritza, a petite woman with friendly green eyes, and his father, Patrick, who towers over the rest of us as he shows off his set of steel pans, which he learned to play while living in Bermuda as a child. He also points CONTINUED ON PAGE 231

The Life Aquatic

The reinvention of a waterfront retreat in New York became an occasion to envision a miniature village—elegant and easygoing at the same time.

Chloe Schama pays a visit. Photographed by Ngoc Minh Ngo.



PRINCE OF TIDES

Seen from the shallow waters of the Peconic Bay, the pump house—now a family vacation home—used to store water that irrigated the property.





“Everything is about the undulations, and picking up the curve of this knoll or hollow,” Brooks says. “That’s my structure in a way”

LEFT AND FAR RIGHT | PHOTOS, COURTESY OF MIRANDA BROOKS. ILLUSTRATION COURTESY OF MIRANDA BROOKS.

Vhen architect Bastien Halard was brought in to freshen up a 1917 Long Island home, he initially thought it would be a fairly quick job. Some paint, maybe a little restoration of the mechanicals. A pool had recently been installed by his wife, the landscape designer Miranda Brooks; before then, there hadn't been much need for one. The property is located on an island, and the Pincus family, who has used the getaway as their vacation home for several decades, had simply turned to the brackish inlets of the surrounding Peconic Bay for their bathing, launching paddleboards between the marshy grasses. When Brooks put in the bluestone-paved pool—the first step in a gradual reimaging of the grounds—the imperative had been to

preserve the sight line to the shore and to match the surrounding hue, to make it feel more like a pond, a gentle continuation of the bayside landscape.

But, as with any hundred-plus-year-old structure, updates were needed. Before the New York-based Pincus family bought the property in the late '60s, it had been a members-only club, and the buildings that dotted the island made up the kind of infrastructure that would support mass distribution of gin and tonics after a tennis match. There were storage sheds that contained little more than slumbering lawn mowers. A pump house where an elevated water tower stored what was needed to irrigate the island had been converted into living quarters. That home, however, was not quite set up to accommodate the kinds of gatherings that the current owners, Henry and Ana Pincus, like to assemble. They wanted a sort of summer

(and winter) camp for them and their three children, a place for all ages with lawn games on the meadows, barbecues by the pool, picnics in the flower garden, sundowners by the firepit, egg-and-spoon races at Easter, and igloo-building at Christmas. And then there was memory to contend with, as well: Henry grew up here over vacations and summers (he was three weeks old when he paid his first visit), and even spent several years of his childhood on the island before he started elementary school. So the happy conundrum became one of building on inheritance and history. It would be a family home—layered on top of a place with a very different initial purpose—with decades of memories ingrained, and new ones being added all the time. This involved laying new foundations while not destroying the old ones. The problem became, says Brooks, “how do you honor those memories, but make it work?”



STRONG ROOTS

Indigenous plants like bayberry (FAR LEFT) were the best defense against voracious deer. But Brooks did plant lavender and rosemary in the grid-like formal garden near the main house's kitchen (NEAR LEFT), and a dahlia-filled cutting and vegetable garden behind a double fence (ABOVE). BELOW: Brooks's plan for the property.



A guesthouse was planned: It would be a modern, streamlined structure that would pay homage to the Shaker simplicity of the original pump house, but without the antique mullioned windows or crooked door jambs. It would be situated on a gentle knoll that looked out at the wildest corner of the bay, where piping plovers and terns are the only interruption of the view—a startlingly unimpeded vantage given the density of regimented, hydrangea-bordered mini mansions nearby in this stretch of Long Island.

But something about the plan did not sit right—the guesthouse would have the most majestic position, while the pump house, which the Pincuses intended to keep as the main residence, remained in a dip in the property, its views serene and lovely but a bit more modest. Although they toyed with the idea of building a new house on the higher land, the couple was committed to preserving the original structure—both for environmental reasons and to maintain the beautiful, lived-in feel of the building. And so the entire pump house, with the help of a crew of barn movers from Vermont, was lifted and deposited a hundred yards or so



ARBOR DAZE

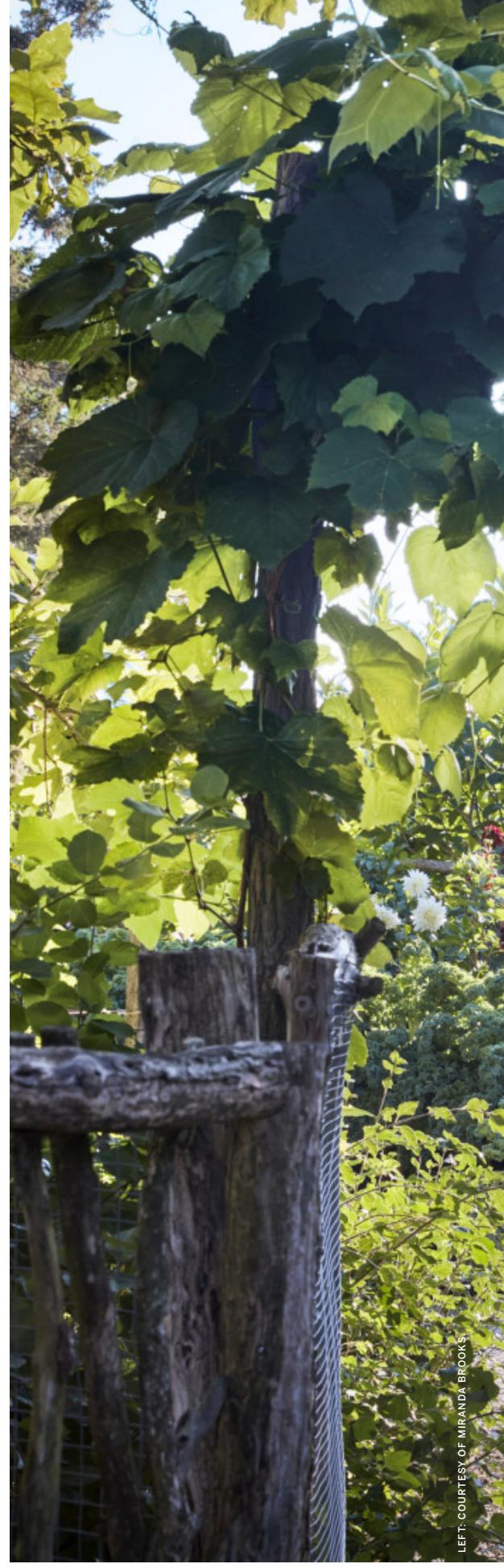
ABOVE: Paddleboarding on the brackish waters of the bay. RIGHT: The entrance to the fenced cutting garden—what Brooks calls “the heart of the medieval village,” with an arch covered in grapevine.

on the higher elevation. “That was a very exciting day,” says Halard. “They cut through the earth like it was a wedge of cheese,” says Brooks. Barn-like doors were replaced with sliding glass panels that vanish into the walls, creating a glass box connecting the two sides of the house when they’re closed and a kind of outdoor hallway when they’re open. From what Brooks calls “the village green,” a mown knoll, bordered by long, sashaying meadow grasses on either side, there’s now an unimpeded view through to the bay beyond. A new staircase was installed, spiraling up to the top of the pump house, to fully utilize its lighthouse-like height, the interior walls lined with planks of oak, making you feel, says Brooks, a bit like you’re on the “inside of a Japanese bento box.”

Once the position of the main residence had been established, there was the rest of the grounds to consider. The guesthouse had to be completed, and while it would be a new structure, it had to feel in keeping with the layered history here. Fishing wire was wedged between the floorboards to introduce slight imperfections. Halard sourced an old church door for the main entrance. “I believe that buildings and furniture have souls, accumulated from the people who

built and handled them throughout time,” he says. “I really struggle when an entrance door is something that has been sawed by a computer.” A dormitory-like room in the lofted attic space can now sleep six, the beds lined up like so many cots from *Madeline*. Another husband-and-wife team, Alexandra and Michael Misczynski of Atelier AM, were brought in to work on the interiors of all the buildings. Alex and Michael pulled items from the Pincus family inventory, but also from auction houses and trusted purveyors like the great Manhattan retailer of 18th- and 19th-century English furniture, Cove Landing. Wooden cabinets bought in Belgium were repurposed to house TV equipment. “If our work is anything,” says Michael, “it is about bringing interesting things, but also adding foils, so that it all feels approachable.” The light, beaming in from all sides, found its way into the design. Halard imported Moroccan zellige tiles for the main kitchen to refract and distill the sunshine, while Atelier AM painted the walls of the guesthouse a nectarine white to offer just the faintest hint of a reflected sunset.

Beyond the main house and the guesthouse, the hodgepodge of scattered structures that had been used mainly for utilitarian



LEFT: COURTESY OF MIRANDA BROOKS





purposes were ripe for reinventions, with the idea that each would encourage a different impulse in their visitors. There is now a party-friendly poolhouse with an outdoor kitchen primed for long lunches. A barn has become a yoga studio and miniature wellness retreat, complete with sauna and meditation rooms. (Ana Pincus runs the Akhilanda Women's Foundation, devoted to making various modes of healing from trauma more accessible; it will soon open a center in Somerset, England.) A dock provides easy access for paddleboards or fishing with bamboo rods. "Each one of the houses," says Alex Misczynski, "has a different kind of spirit. We played with the idea that you would go to the boathouse and it was a little more rustic. There was nothing precious down there. There were antique textiles. It just feels like a place you want to throw a cocktail party for people in bathing suits." Somewhat farther afield, a tree house was built with locust branches and rough-hewn planks—a tantalizing fairy-tale structure that seems almost like an outgrowth of the tree in which it sits.

Just as important as the architectural reinventions was the landscaping, which was not so much a matter of imposing anything

CENTER OF IT ALL

ABOVE: The guesthouse, with its weathered antique church door, sits on the site formerly occupied by the pump house.
RIGHT: The asymmetric pool, designed to fade into the surrounding landscape.

formal as letting the gentle swales and hills dictate what should be done and somehow still knit the entire miniature village together. Near the entrance, one side of the drive had been shorn to the ground, while the other had been allowed to flourish with indigenous plantings. Brooks spent four years painstakingly restoring the naked side to something like its natural state—a measure of the patience demanded, in the end, by the whole project. "Everything is about the undulations, and picking up the curve of this knoll or hollow," she says. "That's my structure in a way. Otherwise, it's really amorphous. There's just the barest thread that describes the different spaces. I became much more natural in my approach to the actual garden spaces."

There were some careful plantings introduced, however, amid the windswept trees. Native plants like bluestem grass, bayberry, and beach plum were cultivated to give

texture and guide the sight lines. A cutting garden was important to Ana, despite the challenge posed by the insatiable deer, and so Brooks created a circular double-fenced garden with an outer ring of phlox and *Eryngium yuccifolium* (or rattlesnake master) and cutting beds filled with Acidanthera, sunflowers, and dahlias in dark reds, whites, and some biscuit tones to echo the wood planks inside the house. In the inner ring she planted lettuces and kale, eggplants, and zucchini. Nearby an apple orchard was planted, and surrounding the house, Brooks deployed a primarily white, minimal palette with a bit of black and green, planting *Iris germanica*, *rockii* tree peonies, *Wisteria sinensis* 'Alba,' and *Aster umbellatus*. The gravel-filled grid garden just outside the kitchen was Brooks's only concession to rigidity, the lavender, thyme, and rosemary plantings echoing the right angles of the windowpanes. (The rosemary thrives, with thick branches of waxy green needles even in the winter, because of its proximity to the water.) Any paving Brooks installed was meant to provide the faintest outline of a place to gather, a suggestion for a wander rather than a road that must be taken. □



Catering as installation art? Tableware with a sense of humor? The creations of Laila and Nadia Gohar have turned food-world self-seriousness delightfully on its head. By Tamar Adler. Photographed by Norman Jean Roy.

Sister Act



TWO TOP

Nadia (in Dries Van Noten, FAR LEFT) and Laila Gohar (in Polo Ralph Lauren), the cofounders of tableware line Gohar World, photographed in Laila's Manhattan apartment.

Fashion Editor:
Jorden Bickham.



When I arrive just before the winter holidays at Laila and Nadia Gohar's office in Chinatown—which they share with Laila's food-and-art company, LG Studio—Laila tells me that she and Nadia kind of imagine Gohar World, the Cairo-born sisters' nine-month-old line of cheeky and exquisite host- and tableware, as a planet. Laila is standing in a voluminous white Simone Rocha skirt and snub-nosed Gucci slides at an induction burner making studio lunch. (At least once a week, Laila's endearingly grandmotherly studio lunches can be glimpsed on Instagram. Today it's strozzapreti and potatoes.) "Or maybe a touring circus company," she offers, tipping water from a tomato can into her pot. "Especially when we go places, and there's food flying out of the car and highly toxic materials like shellac."

In Gohar World, already beloved for its satin-bowed baguette bags, Battenberg lace wine-bottle aprons, and candles shaped like baskets of ricotta, everything is meticulously crafted, and a little droll. The designer Simone Rocha emails me: "I feel like they dress a table like they would dress in my clothes, which I love!" In Gohar World, tables wear starched collars and shirting, chandeliers hold eggs, and beans aren't a budget food, but so deeply loved that they're hand-painted in Milan on Paravicini platters and printed in cheeky kelly green on Gohar World packing tape. Laila and Nadia, small and sylphlike, are deeply entrenched in the carb-conscious world of fashion, but in Gohar World everyone eats pasta. "Everyone eats everything here," submits Laila, when I remark on it. "It's in the job description," says Nadia, 33, who is a finer boned, more reserved version of her older (by 13 months) sister. She has joined us, in a cerulean sweatshirt with a lace collar poking out and baggy boys jeans, for lunch. This, I learn, is typical Nadia—ironic but good-natured. When I ask them to muse on the governance of the imaginary planet, Gohar World, Nadia replies, "I think the government is beans."

After lunch—which is delicious and eaten by all the Gohar World citizens in the studio today, including the florist Miguel Yatco, graphic designer Monica Magsanoc, and studio manager Yukimi Nata ("Yukimi does literally everything," I'm told)—Laila begins an afternoon of design meetings for Gohar World's next collection. Nadia has to skip this to receive Gohar World holiday deliveries—cardboard boxes full of candles

shaped like flan and cauliflower from Italy, chicken-feet necklaces of natural pearl from Vietnam, and other whimsical, handcrafted items for the table. Nadia's absence is the source of considerable, recognizably familial, bickering. As I leave the studio, I mention having recorded some of the design meeting. Nadia remarks: "Oh, that's great. I'll know what happened."

Chef Ignacio Mattos—known for his own tendency toward artful presentation at his New York restaurants Estela, Altro Paradiso, Lodi, and, most recently, Corner Bar, and who has been dating Laila for nearly three years—tells me of the sisters: "The two of them are very in sync. Even if they're

extremely different. They have a complicity with each other. They disagree all the time, but they're incredibly close and incredibly loyal. They have each other's back." Laila is the more extroverted. She's been in the public eye for a decade, via her large-scale edible installations commissioned for openings by fashion houses from Cartier to Hermès to Prada (these evolved out of the catering company, Sunday Supper, she started 12 years ago). Laila is voluble, speaking in long, deeply felt soliloquies, punctuated by strong declarations: "I hate nostalgia. It's annoying." Nadia just moved to New York last February from Toronto, where she spent years working as a successful painter. (Nadia



PLANET GOHAR

A range of items from Gohar World's line, including serving plate, mother-of-pearl bean dish, and spoon.



FEAST FOR THE SENSES

"Everything that we do, we're going to do it in our way," says Laila (RIGHT), who wears a Tory Burch coat and Prada dress and knit. Nadia wears a Bottega Veneta dress. In this story: hair, Anton Alexander; makeup, Romy Soleimani. Details, see In This Issue.

has had multiple solo and group shows and artist residencies. She continues to paint in New York. "Now it's lots of red on canvas," she says.) The sisters conceived of Gohar World together, through long conversations between Toronto and New York, with a clear idea of what they wanted to make. Behind the scenes, Nadia is known to be unwavering. Mattos affirms this: "Nadia has very strong opinions, and ways of making her point come across, but it's a lot more subtle."

I meet the sisters for lunch the next day inside the bright and airy Corner Bar, which Mattos opened last summer at Nine Orchard, the new Lower East Side hotel inhabiting the former Jarmulowsky Bank. Laila is early, standing outside the restaurant and texting, in a men's button-down and barn jacket, both several sizes too big. "I'm lurking," she laughs. She waves to the staff as we're seated in a sunny corner booth. Momentarily, Nadia arrives, wearing a vintage Fiorucci sweatshirt and a Mattos

Hospitality hat, which Laila finds hilarious: "They're going to think you work here!"

We order—salades niçoise for Nadia and me and a club sandwich for Laila—and I ask them to tell me about their childhoods. Laila and Nadia attended an international school in Cairo, where they were raised by parents with an 18-year age difference. "My dad was my mom's journalism teacher," Laila says. Their father, Mohamed Gohar, was a prominent photojournalist, and one-time personal photographer for President Anwar Sadat. Their mother, Nevin, raised the sisters at home.

Mohamed and Nevin modeled the kind of synchronous yin and yang equanimity I've observed in Laila and Nadia. "They're opposites. My dad is really outside the box," Nadia says. "He was, like, the class dad, and the class clown. Our mother was more conventional." The sisters themselves were always simultaneously entwined and divergent—both drawn to crafts and other creative pursuits.

Nadia drew and painted. "And I collected rocks," she tells me. "Even though we had the same upbringing and we're one year apart and we're always really close," Laila says, "I was kind of rebellious and uncomfortable as a little kid. Nadia was popular. She was on the honor roll." ("No, I wasn't," Nadia protests. "Yes, you were!") There are two more Gohar siblings, Nour and Janna, who are 10 years younger than Laila and Nadia. "We're the most similar in terms of sensibility. We were raised together. I also think that, when you have kids so many years apart, you're a different person, you know?" says Laila. "Our two younger siblings are more practical." (Nour works in film and sound production in Toronto and Janna as a graphic designer in Paris.)

Laila and Nadia's maternal grandmother, Nabila, was, and remains, a huge influence on both of them. "We joke that she's my real mother," Nadia says. "She's kind of our third partner," Laila adds, CONTINUED ON PAGE 232

KING CARLOS

He's the youngest player ever to reach number one in men's tennis. How far will Carlos Alcaraz go? By Gaby Wood. Photographed by Dan Jackson.

On a crisp, sunny day in southeastern Spain, a 19-year-old tennis player is training. As of last September, he is number one in the world and the youngest to hold his ranking since records began. Carlos Alcaraz, “Carlitos” to his friends, “Charlie” when talking to himself, has lived at this tennis academy in Villena for the past three years. The facility is built amid farmland, and lies between a high-security prison and a medieval castle. The new king of tennis trains here for two hours every morning—and there’s much more to come, he assures me, after the morning session is over. His schedule consists of “tennis, tennis, and more tennis.”

He slides and glides across the court. “Venga, venga, venga!” he tells himself, clenching his fist. As the ball makes contact with the racket, his half-grunted, half-sung exhalations echo in the arid air, protracted: “Ehhhh!” He’s hitting with a lanky 15-year-old American named Darwin Blanch, who has the particular coltish gait of a teenager whose limbs have grown at high speed. Seeing the pair together highlights the extent to which the six-foot Alcaraz, who was of a similar build at that age, has grown to meet requirements. “Today most players are beasts,” his coach, Juan Carlos Ferrero, tells me. (By contrast, Ferrero, who was world number one in 2003, was so slim and speedy as a player that he was nicknamed “El Mosquito.”) Ferrero is directing them to play two specific shots at a time,

plus one of their own choice. Most players, he explains, “play to destroy, not to build. Carlos is physically explosive and very fast. I can’t make him play slowly, but I hope he’s capable of construction. He’s naturally creative. That’s a plus.”

In a black T-shirt, navy shorts, and Nike Vapor Pro 2 court shoes with orange heels and a bright pink swoosh, Alcaraz is both casual and monumental. As he moves along the baseline, the sun delineates the muscles in his legs to an almost cartoonish degree: foot down, followed by a visible upward surge of strength. He practices a version of the shot he made famous by beating Jan-nik Sinner in the US Open quarter finals: He returns the ball by twisting and reaching behind his back—as if tossing a set of keys, or glancing over his shoulder to see if he’s forgotten something. A boyish grin. He plays tennis as if it were—well, a game.

Now that Roger Federer has retired, aficionados in need of a new saint have flocked to Alcaraz. “It’s almost as if God sent him to be the future of tennis,” says Arnold Rampersad, who cowrote Arthur Ashe’s 1994 memoir, *Days of Grace*. “He’s like an archangel with a wonderful drop shot and incredible court sense.” Geoff Dyer, author of *The Last Days of Roger Federer*, saw him play at Indian Wells last year, and found him to be not only relentless but “the most complete

young player I had seen for ages. At this very early stage of his career, he feels immortal.”

What has he got that others haven’t? A combination of daring, range, tactical flexibility, style, strength, originality, wit. A facility for doing near-splits and leaping up, as if the court were a trampoline. An impressive second serve. Signature drop shots at moments so nerve-racking they’d give most coaches a coronary. “He transcends wherever he’s playing,” the coach and commentator Brad Gilbert tells me. “People everywhere want to root for him because he’s so exciting to watch.”

Over the course of last year’s US Open, which he won, Alcaraz was on court for a record 23 hours and 39 minutes, encompassing three seemingly endless five-set matches, some of which ran far into the night. Before his semifinal, he got to bed at 6 a.m.

“Here’s a good word for it,” Gilbert says. “Fortitude.” He refers to Alcaraz as “Escape from Alcaraz,” he’s so indomitable. “If you told me five years from now that he’d won six or seven Slams, I wouldn’t be surprised at all,” Gilbert reflects. “Maybe it’s 10, maybe it’s less. Obviously a big factor, too, is luck—*injuries*. He plays so physical. But if you told me in five years that he had only one Slam, I would be absolutely shocked.”

With Federer’s departure and the fading of Rafael Nadal—whose joint monopoly, along with that of Novak Djokovic has, in Gilbert’s words, “wiped out about three generations”—tennis is entering a new era. It’s more physical, with lengthier matches, played all over the world and—thanks to TV

GAME ON

OPPOSITE: Alcaraz wears a Tom Ford jacket.
Fashion Editor: Edward Bowleg III.



THE FIGHTER

"At this very early stage of his career," says Geoff Dyer, author of *The Last Days of Roger Federer*, Alcaraz "feels immortal." Hermès jacket and pants. Hoodie from Guest In Residence. In this story: grooming, Carol Guzman using Oribe and Sisley. Details, see In This Issue.



scheduling—at all times of day and night; and there are more tournaments, more press, more social media demands; more ways for the outside world to enter the players’ own and distract them. In March, just before he’s due to play Indian Wells, Alcaraz will face off against Nadal in a “first of its kind tennis experience” at the MGM Grand Garden Arena in Las Vegas. Called “The Slam,” this gladiatorial contest is advertised with metal music on the soundtrack and will be held at a venue probably best known for the boxing match in which Mike Tyson bit off part of Evander Holyfield’s ear.

We’re a long way from all of that here at Ferrero’s training academy, where conveniences are minimal and merchandise is modest. It’s the first week of January—a painstakingly arranged nativity scene remains in one of the cafeteria’s cupboards—and while many players are already in Australia for the Open, Alcaraz and Ferrero have opted to spend more time preparing at home. Toward the end of 2022, Alcaraz had an injury in an abdominal muscle that led him to pull out of the Davis Cup. Both he and Ferrero say he’s completely recovered.

He greets me after training with a broad Tom Cruise smile. We sit at a table outside. Close-up, his dark hair bears a few dotted strands of white—as befits a prodigy, perhaps—and his manner of speech is so frank I occasionally think I may have misheard. “I’ve always been a very talented kid,” he tells me, without boastfulness or guile. “But I’ve always worked hard. Because if you’re talented and don’t make an effort you get nowhere.”

Alcaraz has been at this game—the interview game—since he was a child. A video shot when he was 12 shows him squinting up into the camera and declaring that Federer is his idol. Why not his countryman Nadal?

“Rafa is someone I’ve always watched,” he says now. “I admire him a lot. But Federer, the class he had, the way he got people to see tennis: That was beautiful. Watching Federer is like looking at a work of art. It’s elegance, he did everything magnificently. I became enchanted by him.”

Alcaraz grew up just over an hour from here, in a village outside Murcia called El Palmar, a place he still visits on weekends. Everyone knows one another, he says, and he has the same friends he hung out with as a child. Some 40 years ago his great-uncle built a tennis club there, on what was a clay-pigeon shooting range, and Alcaraz’s grandfather, Carlos, joined in the venture. Later, Alcaraz’s father—who played professional tennis until he couldn’t afford to continue—became the

director. So Carlitos was born, he says, “with tennis in my blood.” His older brother, Álvaro (now 23), played in tournaments before him, and his younger brothers (ages 13 and 11) are as passionate about tennis as the rest of the family, including his mother, who until recently worked as a shop assistant at IKEA. Alcaraz got his first racket at the age of four, and, according to his father, cried when he had to stop playing to go home for dinner. His social life revolved around the tennis club.

By the time he was 12, he was a serious enough player that he was sponsored by Babolat and Lotto. A family friend who owns Postres Reina, a yogurt and dessert company based in Murcia, had already given him the money he needed to get to a junior



SPAIN AND GLORY

The young star and his countryman Rafael Nadal before their quarter-final match at the Mutua Madrid Open in 2022. (Alcaraz won.)

tournament in Croatia, and continued to cover a lot of his travel costs. Ferrero first saw him play right around this time. “I’d already heard about him,” his coach says. “Especially the fact that he was doing a lot of different things—drop shots and lobs and running to the net, things that young kids don’t do, they just stay at the back, fight, and run. He was very dynamic, you could already see that.”

Alcaraz started training with Ferrero when he was 15. Ferrero had spent eight months coaching Alexander Zverev before parting ways over different views of “professionalism,” Ferrero says. (“We’re great friends,” Ferrero adds of Zverev, disavowing any rift. “He’s trained with Carlos many times.”) In Alcaraz he saw a challenge: a kid with a lot of work ahead.

A

lcaraz’s routine is those several hours of tennis a day, plus training and physical therapy, and a siesta after lunch. He eats whatever he wants, but healthily. In the evenings he’s trying to learn English. “I’ve improved, but I’ve got a long way to go!” Occasionally he’ll watch a movie, and prefers—fittingly—either what he calls suspense or motivation. Motivational movies? I ask, a little confused. “Yes,” he replies. “Sylvester Stallone. You know: Rocky Balboa.”

When he sees his friends on the weekend, he likes to sit with them in the park, or they play board games at one another’s houses. He likes soccer and supports Real Madrid (his older brother supports Barcelona). There were reports of him dating María González Giménez, but Alcaraz alludes to a breakup and says he’s been single for 18 months. “It’s complicated, never staying in one place,” he adds. “It’s hard to find the person who can share things with you if you’re always in different parts of the world.”

One hobby is chess. “I love chess. Having to concentrate, to play against someone else, strategy—having to think ahead. I think all of that is very similar to the tennis court,” Alcaraz says. “You have to intuit where the other player is going to send the ball, you have to move ahead of time, and try to do something that will make him uncomfortable. So I play it a lot.”

A few months ago he started to pay more attention to his clothes, making sure he looked good when he went out into the street. He likes baggy jeans, or baggy pants, a T-shirt, and has just become the new face of Calvin Klein’s underwear campaign (tagline: “Calvins or nothing”). “There are people who only wear top brands, but I haven’t stopped to look at those,” he says. “I dress very simply.”

So what, you may wonder, is he doing with all of his winnings? He laughs. “Well, my father takes care of it. I’m quite young and I’ve got my whims, but I’m very natural, normal, humble. I don’t really pay much attention to brands and cars. If I like something, I try to buy it, but in the end my father takes care of everything.”

What are his whims?

“I’m fanatical about Nike sneakers,” he says. And although he is sponsored by Nike, he explains that there are vintage models he covets “that are quite expensive,” he says. “They’re exclusive, or hard to find. And that’s the kind of thing I buy, if I like them. There are some Jordans, some Dunk Lows, some that Travis Scott has

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Unfinished Business

Do you have filter fatigue? You're not alone: This season, designers are reflecting our decidedly flawed world with perfectly imperfect pieces—which just so happen to be among their most creative (and most beautiful). By Maya Singer. Photographed by Zoë Ghertner.



ON A TEAR

Already the queen of off-duty cool, model Kendall Jenner gets her grunge bona fides sorted with a vintage **Maison Margiela** sheer top. **Re/Done** tank top. **Miu Miu** embellished skirt; miumiu.com.

Fashion Editor:
Alex Harrington.



**WASTE KNOT
WANT KNOT**

Another gauzy,
rather delicate
vintage **Maison**

Margiela top
becomes a bit more
grounded when
matched with
artfully speckled
Polo Ralph
Lauren pants;
ralphlauren.com.

Last summer, in the midst of an emotional tangle I was struggling to unknot, I made an impromptu trip abroad. The trip itself is sidelong to the story I want to tell here, a story about two long flights, the first a sleepless red-eye I spent running laps around my predicament, returning again and again to the question *Why does everything have to be so complicated?* Why can't my life, for once, be straightforward, instead of this endlessly forking path into the dark?

On the flight home, I distracted myself by watching movies—notably, Pedro Almodóvar's *Parallel Mothers*. The film turned me upside down. Its plot is a pileup of mistakes, on a spectrum from oblivious error to historic catastrophe, yet the note Almodóvar lands on is one of uplift: bonds of love forged out of pain and confusion and complexity. It struck me, as the credits rolled, that I could never have been so moved by a film that proceeded according to the logic I wanted to prevail over my own life—that a story about a frictionless, picture-perfect existence wasn't much of a story at all. Perhaps, I mused, gazing out at the lowering sun, the way forward was to embrace the tangle *and* the work of unknotting it.

These thoughts recurred to me as I viewed the Marni spring/summer 2023 collection, shown in September in New York. It was the motif of rising and setting suns that resonated first: Creative director Francesco Risso devised myriad ways of incorporating radiant orbs into his looks—patchworking, printing them on body-skimming jersey dresses, embroidering around circular décolleté cutouts as if drawing a tender frame around the heart. The theme was inspired, Risso later explained, by a moment of pause: He, too, had stared out a window one day amid swirling thoughts and "realized that, whatever else is happening, we can always stop for this beauty, the sun rising or setting, and breathe, and come back into our bodies. Then we go on."

The harder I looked at Risso's suns, the more I was struck by the purposeful imperfection of his clothes, with their odd abutment of textures and dangling sleeves and hems and threads. The imperfection resonated, too: This was a collection emphatically about the marvelous unfinishedness of life, with all its ebbs and flows; a celebration of being *in process*.

As the Fashion Weeks continued, this idea continually reemerged: In London, at Erdem's show, a tribute to the mindful labors of art and antique garment restorers; in Milan, where Matthieu Blazy's precise asymmetries and windswept gestures at Bottega Veneta read

like freeze-frames of life in motion. In Paris, as the collections drew to a close, Dries Van Noten turned his post-pandemic return to the catwalk into a tale of becoming, with all-black looks inspired by Kazimir Malevich's void paintings blossoming, by show's end, into a parade of vivid, blurry florals—a print effect meant to mimic, according to Van Noten, the view of someone "waking up, and squinting at the flowers outside."

Why this theme of unfinishedness, why now? Talking to some of these designers, I got the impression they'd been engaged in reflection similar to my own on those long summer flights—and that, in considering how to create fashion at a moment rocked by various kinds of turmoil, they'd turned away from ideals of *soigné* impeccability and determined instead to capture the feeling of flux. "We're bombarded with images of perfection, but it's a fake perfection—fake beauty, fake happiness," says Van Noten. "Realness was an important word this season. And so this wasn't a 'happy' collection, but an optimistic one—because for me that's more profound: the work we do every day to retain a sense of hope and continue moving forward. True happiness is fleeting," he adds. "Optimism is a journey."

By pushing back against those images of perfection Van Noten describes, fashion is—per usual—reflecting the zeitgeist. We've hit peak filter. For over a decade now, society has been squeezed by the pincer assault of hustle culture and social media, the first insisting we must be relentless self-optimizers and the latter urging us to commodify our seemingly optimized selves via our feeds. "We are under pressure to show that we know how to lead the perfect life," business school professors Carl Cederström and André Spicer wrote in their 2017 book, *Desperately Seeking Self-Improvement: A Year Inside the Optimization Movement*, and nothing since its publication has dimmed the mania for life hacks, energy-boosting supplements, wrinkle fillers, fitness trackers, and follower counts quantifying the performance of brand *me*.

But the new cultural wind is blowing in the direction of a more honest, messier portrait of humanity. You can catch its drift in Risso's dangling Marni threads and the ersatz-looking drapes and gathers throughout Van Noten's collection, and in the rising popularity of BeReal, an app that invites users to post photos of themselves wherever they are, whatever they're doing, once a day.

"Perfectionism isn't unhealthy, per se, but there's a difference between holding yourself to a high standard and an impossible one," notes Scott Braunstein, MD, national medical director at Sollis Health, a boutique medical chain

CONTINUED ON PAGE 233



LET'S SHRED

Jenner wears a Jil Sander by Lucie and Luke Meier wool and sequin top; jilsander.com.



OPEN SEASON

Romance, movement, and an irrepressible sense of fun animate Jenner's **Bottega Veneta** fil coupé halter dress, finished in an extraordinary shade of teal lifted directly from the work of Italian designer Gaetano Pesce; bottegaveneta.com.

THAT'S A STRETCH

Like a Bernini masterpiece brought to life, Jenner reconciles the statuesque and the sensual in a tulle **Dolce & Gabbana** dress; dolcegabbana.com.





OVER AND OUT

A textile made of paper and viscose lends a floral **Prada** frock a crafty—and wonderfully whimsical—kind of loveliness; prada.com.



INTO THE FRAY

Ribbons of deadstock rayon and cotton, tied together by the softest shade of cotton candy pink, are the making of a beguiling **CDLM** dress; Ikram, Chicago.

IN STITCHES

Jenner leans into the art of the undone with an elaborately ruffled **Dries Van Noten** cotton blazer and trousers; driesvannoten.com. **The Row** sandals. In this story: hair, Tamara McNaughton; makeup, Fara Homidi. Details, see In This Issue.



DOUBLE TROUBLE

Set aside, for a moment, the subtle evening clutch and consider a midsize bag with outsize élan. Model Stella Jones (NEAR RIGHT) carries a Victoria Beckham bag. Dries Van Noten rings. Versace dress; versace.com. Model Lila Moss holds a Jil Sander by Lucie and Luke Meier bag. Saint Laurent by Anthony Vaccarello dress; ysl.com. Fashion Editor: Max Ortega.



TWO OF A KIND

Dressed in spring's most captivating accessories—from jubilant jewels to a bevy of bags and hats and statement necklaces—models and lifelong friends Lila Moss and Stella Jones paint the town. Photographed by Tina Barney.





BEANIE BABIES

Same-same, but charmingly different: Set loose in the elegantly appointed Hotel Barrière Fouquet's New York in SoHo, Moss and Jones try on a matching moment in **Fendi** beanies. Moss wears a **Loewe** minidress; loewe.com. Jones wears a **Lanvin** jacket and skirt; lanvin.com.

PRINTED MATTER

Have spring florals ever looked quite so fresh—or so gloriously glamorous?

Where Moss pairs her striking Gucci sandals with a Dior jacket, top, skirt, and shorts (Dior boutiques), Jones plucks a winsome Loewe mule for her ankle-grazing Gucci dress; gucci.com.



**EVERYTHING
IN ITS PLACE**

Moss wears
Louis Vuitton
earrings, necklace,
tights, dress, and
bra; select Louis
Vuitton boutiques.
Jones wears

Tom Ford earrings.
Dries Van Noten
blouse and skirt;
driesvannoten.com.



Fast Friends

As Lila Moss and Stella Jones slip into statement accessories for this shoot, it soon becomes clear that these two models are inseparable. In between shots, the pair—both 20 years old and best friends since childhood—pass the time fixing each other's hair, or practicing the viral dance that Jenna Ortega performs on *Wednesday*. (“We need to film that TikTok!” Lila shouts at Stella.)

The duo grew up hanging out at each other's family homes in London. “Our parents are friends, so it happened naturally,” says Lila, the daughter of Kate Moss and media entrepreneur Jefferson Hack—Jones’s father is Mick Jones, the guitarist for the Clash; her mother is film producer Miranda Davis.

When it comes to matters of style, though, Lila favors a sleek, understated palette, while Stella leans into vibrant colors and prints, particularly for the red carpet—whether that means the Fashion Awards in London or a Marc Jacobs holiday party in New York, where they both primarily now reside. “When we were younger, we planned to be matching for everything,” says Stella. “Now we don’t want to be the same,” adds Moss, finishing her thought. That said, they both still borrow plenty from each other’s wardrobes. “I collect all the stuff I’ve taken from Lila at the end of a week and just lug it back over in a bag,” says Stella with a laugh.

On their days off, the two live a choose-your-own-adventure life: “We discovered a bao bun place between us, so we go there a lot,” Lila says. “Or we’ll walk the Brooklyn Bridge, or go to a museum. We also just went to an alpaca farm in New Jersey.” Making time for fun is no easy task, though: Lila has been busy walking for Tommy Hilfiger and Fendi, while Stella recently starred in a Heaven by Marc Jacobs campaign.

Both are obsessed with accessories. “For me it’s bags, says Lila, who has recently been stepping out carrying Gucci’s Bamboo 1947’s and Prada Cleos, “and I’ve raided my mum’s bigger-handle bags.” Stella, meanwhile, is fixated on sneakers and collects everything from Adidas Superstars to Air Jordans. They did once share a favorite accessory—“gold halves of a heart, each one with our initials on it with a little diamond,” as Stella remembers with some sadness: Lila lost her half. “That era,” Lila says with a laugh, “is over.” —CHRISTIAN ALLAIRE





SUPPER CLUB

Moss sweetens up Fouquet's cozy brasserie—spearheaded by Pierre Gagnaire, a major name on the Parisian dining scene—with her Dolce & Gabbana bag. Miu Miu top; miumiu.com. Jones, meanwhile, lets her jewelry do the talking in major Tom Ford earrings. Bottega Veneta bag, sweater, and skirt; bottegaveneta.com.

BUDDY SYSTEM

Moss wears a **Prada Fine Jewelry** necklace and **Prada** dress; prada.com. Jones wears bags, brooch, barrette, earrings, jacket, top, and shorts, by **Chanel**; select Chanel boutiques. In this story: hair, Lucas Wilson; makeup, Raisa Flowers. Details, see In This Issue.



A close-up, high-contrast portrait of a woman's face, focusing on her eyes, nose, and mouth. She has dark skin and is smiling broadly, showing her teeth. She is wearing a green tweed hat with a large, ornate diamond brooch in the shape of a flower on top. Another smaller diamond brooch is visible on the side of the hat. Her eyes are dark and expressive.

PETAL TO THE METAL

Things are looking up for Adut Akech, whose tweed hat from **The Attico** is adorned with **Van Cleef & Arpels**'s 18k gold botanical brooch (worn throughout); vancleefarpels.com.

OPPOSITE: The matching suit includes a bra top, skirt, and jacket trimmed with fringe—the latter clearly optional; theattico.com.

Fashion Editor:
Tabitha Simmons.



Put a pin in it—
it's the most dazzling
way to add a little
flourish to your look.

For Adut Akech,
that pin just happens
to be attached to a
diamond Van Cleef &
Arpels brooch shaped
into a garden rose.

Photographed
by Sean Thomas.

Just One Thing



TAKE A BOW

The humble ribbon boasts endless styling opportunities—but have you considered tying it around your hair with a lavish diamond-encrusted rose pin? It's almost too lovely to take.



OPPOSITES ATTRACT

Diamonds and denim are a proven pairing, but Akech ups the effortless ante with jeans, a plain white tank, and a boxy blazer from Stella McCartney: stellamccartney.com. The rips at the knee read like thorns on the Van Cleef rose.

BACK IN BLACK

You might have noticed the 1997 on the sleeve of Akech's tuxedo-like Dolce & Gabbana dress—it's the year the piece (and the coordinating shirt, leggings, and tie; dolcegabbana.com) was first designed before being reissued this season. A novel addition comes by way of the jewelry—alongside the rose brooch are two Van Cleef & Arpels bee brooches buzzing with sapphires, rubies, diamonds, and purple spinels.





STRING THEORY

The fringe benefits of this Michael Kors Collection dress (michaelkors.com) are apparent—a body in motion is all the more amusing when your dress moves along with you. Since it doesn't need much else, the decadent brooch is worn like a choker.

TWIST AND SHOUT

Akech tops off an antique-looking organza Erdem dress (erdem.com) strewn with pretty petals with a cropped cardigan by Khaite (khaite.com). And on top of all that? The brooch. The whole look is grounded by a slick pair of thigh-high The Attico boots. It's anything but expected—and that's precisely why it works.



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ALL TOGETHER NOW

In a medley of pastel colors, Akech's final exercise in brooch dressing comes courtesy of **Ralph Lauren Collection's** V-neck sweater and white button-up (ralphlauren.com) and knitted tie in cotton candy pink by **Anderson & Sheppard**—with a farewell kiss from the Van Cleef rose.

In this story: hair, Johnnie Sapong for Leonor Greyl; makeup, Holly Silius. Details, see In This Issue.

The Get

1



2



3



Works in Progress

Raw hems and heavy
stitchwork give spring pieces
a crafty finishing touch.

6



5



4





1. TORY BURCH DRESS;
TORY BURCH BOUTIQUES. 2. COACH
CARDIGAN, \$650; COACH.COM.

3. LANVIN NECKLACE, \$890; LANVIN
.COM. 4. CHLOÉ COAT; CHLOÉ.COM.

5. SAINT LAURENT BY ANTHONY
VACCARELLO CUFF, \$2,290; YSL.COM.

6. MARNI BAG; MARNI.COM.

7. OMEGA WATCH; OMEGAWATCHES
.COM. 8. ERDEM COAT; ERDEM.COM.

9. MAX MARA SKIRT, \$1,050;
MAXMARA.COM. 10. R13 COM. 11. GIVENCHY BAG,
\$2,250; GIVENCHY.COM.

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8



9



11



10

VISION QUEST

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 132

wide-open pair of hedge-cutting shears. "I chose quite randomly to put the scissors very close to her private areas. I always think I have the exact idea going into a painting, but actually, I never know how it's going to end up—which I think keeps me painting. The paintings wouldn't be the same if I planned everything. Painting is so much about patience. You have to just wait. You have to tolerate so many ugly stages and layers of imagery until it works out. I feel like the work I'm making right now doesn't come from anger or resentment. Overall, they're not as dooming as the other paintings I've made. I think they're more celebratory."

These days, Gordon's life is not just in the studio. "I'm very single right now," she says, cheerfully. But she's made new friends—a community of Asian artists including Anna Park, Dominique Fung, Amanda Ba, and others whose work she admires, and who have studios in the same building. She goes out for margaritas or burgers at Walter's or to Roman's in nearby Fort Greene. She also enjoys hunting for secondhand designer clothes ("anything by Issey Miyake" and "Jean Paul Gaultier mesh shirts") or just "eye-shopping" for fun. "I listen to music and dance by myself," she says, laughing. "And I love to sing." In the studio, she half-watches TV shows that she's seen before—*Sex and the City* and Lena Dunham's *Girls*, a series she's rewatched three times. She gets to the studio at about noon and often works until five in the morning.

Gordon still has a lot to say, using herself as the main character in her paintings. "I really do like painting myself," she tells me. She plans to continue with self-portraiture for another year, until her Miami museum show opens this December. That's her last commitment. "I've been showing for three years, and I'm curious to see what the work could look like if I'm not showing it. I would like to just make work and not have the audience in mind. I might like to paint figures other than myself. I want to free myself and get back to the innocence of making art." □

INTO THE MYSTIC

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 156

it into something wonderful, because it's something I once dreaded."

Badu's 2023 to-do list is seemingly endless and written in all caps on a board that hangs in the kitchen, lest she forgets—this month, for example, she's dropping a collection of smoking accessories and her own blend of marijuana. Tonight, her thoughts are preoccupied with creative labor of a different kind: R&B singer Summer Walker is pregnant with twins, due any day now, and Badu will serve as the 26-year-old's doula. "I'm kind of antsy, walking around making sure I have all my things," she says, pacing between the sink and the stove. This marks her first multiple birth and also the first time that Puma will assist her in this role. "Puma is a very giving person," she says, pausing to gather her thoughts. "I really like the lady she's becoming."

When I ask how many babies Badu has helped bring into the world, she shrugs: At this point, she's lost count. It's been over 20 years since the singer, who is also a certified Reiki master, was first inspired to become a doula after assisting on the labor of a close friend. Now each year she makes time for at least one or two expectant moms, some of whom are friends, others women she meets in passing. "It's a passion thing for her, she's really invested," says Teyana Taylor, who asked Badu to be her doula after the pair worked on music together in 2020. It was Badu who noticed that Taylor's now two-year-old daughter, Rue, was showing signs of distress a few days after she was born; Rue was subsequently rushed to the hospital and kept under surveillance for a week. "Erykah just felt it," says Taylor. "She just knew."

Motherhood might be the thing that comes most naturally to Badu. As a young girl she dreamed of having seven children—and in fact, Badu was a mother almost from the moment she was famous. She became pregnant with her first child about a month after *Baduizm* was released, and gave birth to her second the same day her sophomore album, *Mama's Gun*, dropped. "I had to breastfeed the whole time," says Badu, who would also homeschool her children from the back of a tour bus. She jokes that while her male musician friends were busy scoping the audience for groupies, she was looking out for babysitters.

That irrepressible spirit didn't go unnoticed by her peers. "Now we take it for

granted because we see so many female entertainers with children. Before, it was the kiss of death for your career," says her friend Maxwell, who came onto the neo-soul scene a year prior to Badu. "She actually proved that you can really thrive, that being a mother didn't have to hold you back." Still, as a woman with three children to three different fathers, who has never been married, Badu has faced her fair share of scrutiny and gossip. In the early aughts, hip-hop blogs were full of snarky commentary about her so-called mystical power over men. (There is a YouTube tutorial called "How to Erykah Badu a Man.") "It was like we were Mormons or something, like all the daddies were living at the house in the same period!" she remembers, throwing her hands up. The real story is that Badu has an amicable relationship with all three of her children's fathers—she has been a doula for Puma's father, The D.O.C., and his now wife twice. They're all highly committed and involved co-parents, a happy blended family.

On the topic of her current relationship status, Badu plays coy. When I ask her if she has a romantic partner, she simply says, "I can't say." (Most recently, she has been linked to a Dallas-based artist who goes by the name of JaRon The Secret.) At this point in her life, she's more prepared to play agony aunt than she is to bear her soul. When I press her on the point, she pulls up a note she sent to her sister, Koko, shortly before officiating her wedding on a beach in Belize last fall. If I want to know her thoughts on what a successful relationship should look like, it's all here, she tells me: acceptance, patience, honesty, joyful togetherness. Read aloud with her slow, deliberate cadence, the message comes across like an incantation: "We shall have a long, long life as one or two. One faith, one practice as one or two. Transparency. Hand holding. A whole lot of laughs. Confidence through the fears. Years and years and years...Letting fruitless things go and fruit will grow. And a nice-sized joint. Easy breaths."

A couple of days later, as I'm on my way to the airport, I receive a text message from Badu: a collection of photos that includes images Queenie took on my visit, plus a couple of goofy selfies of the singer with her kids. This is Badu at her most playful, the doting mother, auntie,

and loyal sister who isn't afraid to act silly for a picture. If she wasn't so exquisitely dressed, with bells on her feet, you might not recognize her as a star.

I text her back: *I've heard Summer Walker is about to go into labor—how's it going?* She responds with a smiley face emoji. Pictures of Badu and her daughter Puma and the heavily pregnant Walker are all over Instagram. I wonder aloud how Puma's doing on her first assignment as a doula's assistant. But really I needn't worry. If she's anything like her mother, she's bound to be a natural. □

A DIFFERENT DRUM

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out a photo of himself with famed ukulele player Tiny Tim, whose band he performed with. At the kitchen table, Maxwell takes a seat between his parents, as if bracing himself for a mortifying go-around of childhood stories and photos.

His parents run through some obligatory anecdotes. They tease him about a childhood talent show performance of "Hey Jude." "You sounded like Alfalfa from *The Little Rascals*," Patrick says. But they are also full of admiration for their son and what he taught them about looking critically at the world. Patrick relates watching reruns of the '60s Marines-set sitcom *Gomer Pyle U.S.M.C.* and Max asking him why the Black and Chinese characters never got to speak. "I knew the answer," Patrick says, "but I didn't know how to articulate it to a 10-year-old."

Maritza tells me some of her own story, how her family home in Cuba was taken by the state following the Cuban Revolution, and her father, a sports radio jockey, was forced into manual labor. "He didn't know how to hold a hammer," she says. He was put to work repairing rooftops, and then in the sugarcane fields—what she describes as "a process of humiliation." She and her family fled to Miami in the late 1960s, where Maritza's mother worked long hours in factories. (As an adult, Frost was struck by the physical toll that factory life had taken on his grandmother, who passed away in October.)

Maritza shows me a small gold pin that belonged to her mother, engraved with Cuba's coat of arms. "I want to wear this for the inauguration, but I worry people will call me a communist," said Maritza.

Among many Cuban immigrants and their children, the specter of communism still looms large—a perceived threat that, to a certain extent, has made Cuban Americans one of the most conservative voting blocks among Latinos in America. Maritza, however, is not one of them.

"A woman came to me in the supermarket," Maritza recalls. "She said, 'You don't want to be involved with the Democrats—look what happened to Cuba.' They get this from TV, from the radio shows. That's how they scare people. They use what happened to us as a tool of manipulation and control."

Frost has spent years steeling himself for such hostility—and not just because he is an internet native who learned not to read the comments in grade school. His activism for greater gun-control measures has brought him a not insignificant amount of unwanted attention, even threats. "I know he's not telling me everything because he doesn't want me to worry about it," says Patrick.

"The thing about Max is, he's totally fearless," he adds. "He doesn't show any level of intimidation in front of people who he should be intimidated by."

"I do have fear," says Frost, "but it's about what you do with it."

On the Tuesday that Frost *should* have been sworn in as a member of Congress, I walk down wet cobblestone streets to Union Stage, a waterfront pub in DC. Inside the venue, Frost—who has been quietly chewing on the cud of a nightmare scenario where not enough people show up to his inauguration party—says he extended invitations to about 600 of his closest friends, family, and colleagues. He has also enlisted his best friend Chico's hip-hop group, Subtxt, to open the ceremonies. The headlining act is a former MadSoul Fest act, Brooklyn funk band Phony Ppl, who generated buzz after opening for Kali Uchis and backing Megan Thee Stallion during her Tiny Desk performance for NPR.

Frost, of course, has not yet actually been sworn in. Hard-line Republicans, objecting to the election of Kevin McCarthy as Speaker of the House, have delayed the inauguration of the freshman class. (Frost would not be sworn in until 1:40 on Saturday morning. "Getting sworn in at 2 a.m., with members fighting each

other on the floor is not necessarily the way I saw myself going to Congress," he later told me. "It wasn't a good showing for our country.")

Yet Frost isn't going to let a little C-Span drama slow him down. He has had a busy week, with meetings with the Congressional Progressive Caucus, the Congressional Black Caucus, and the Congressional Hispanic Caucus, and his appointment as vice chair of the Gun Violence Prevention Task Force, along with his fellow freshman congressman from Florida, Jared Moskowitz, who represents the town of Parkland.

Nor is he going to let the DC antics ruin his celebration. He appears in a black blazer over a cream dress shirt, accented with a retro Barrymore collar. A formidable procession of Congressional Progressive Caucus members follows him onstage: Washington representative Pramila Jayapal, Arizona representative Ruben Gallego, and Texas representative Sheila Jackson Lee, who is later seen busting a move with Frost during the Phony Ppl set. "Amazing history is being made," Jackson Lee says to the crowd. "Never deny your power. Look in the mirror and say, 'We, too, are America!'"

On the dance floor, packed with Frost's now somewhat sweaty friends from Florida and new peers in DC, I find myself thinking that a slice of multicultural America *has* assembled—and that they are thrilled by their youngest congressional representative, though Frost himself might deflect the attention.

"Being the first of anything in Congress is exciting and worth celebrating, but I don't see myself as *the* representative of Gen Z," Frost had told me back at the diner. "I firmly push back on that, because, one, I don't take myself that seriously, and, two, there are so many different ideologies in a generation. There are no saviors in politics; there's not one person who's going to do it all. We also need to protest. We also need to engage in mutual aid networks to take care of each other. We also need to change the culture, so we need to involve our artists. We need to use every tool in our toolbox to win. Because if we don't? We will lose."

"Going into Congress, I'm showing up as a Floridian," he says. "I show up as an Afro-Latino. I show up as a musician. I'm showing up as my authentic self." □

SISTER ACT

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"our man on the ground there." The linens in Gohar World collections are made in Cairo, along with the company's wrought iron. "We still call my grandmother to ask where to get things made," Nadia says. Nabila was, for years, a professional dressmaker. "When our grandfather was in the army," says Laila, "our grandmother bought sewing machines and started a studio of women who would design and make clothing and sell it to shops." As tweens, the sisters would spend hours at their grandmother's atelier, where Nabila would bootleg American styles for them. "We wanted these jeans that had silkscreened flowers with smiley faces and peace signs," remembers Nadia. They told their grandmother they needed them. "She was like: *I know the guy!*" Nadia remembers. Nabila replicated the jeans, but with one exaggeration. "I remember her drawing them with the chalk pen thing that you draw on fabric with," recalls Laila. "And she drew it out, flared. And I was like, 'No, Grandma, more.' And I took the chalk, and drew it really big." The sisters still rely on Nabila to find artisans and materials in Egypt.

Over lunch, they show me a video of their grandmother describing their vision for Gohar World host gloves—\$38 rubber dishwashing gloves with hand-sewn, starched-lace-trimmed cuffs—to a Cairo artisan named Yasser. In Arabic, she explains how the lace cuffs will be sewn on, and then says, in English, "Fantastic," to which Yasser nods, saying, "Funky." Nabila sewed every satin bow that adorns every Gohar World baguette bag. "She sent them to us in a suitcase," Laila says.

I find myself wondering, aloud, how it is that Gohar World's objects, which might come across as kitschy or frivolous, don't. "The humor is the saving grace, I think," says Laila. "Because if it wasn't funny—if we took all these things really seriously—I think it would be so obnoxious. The whole idea is that there are these objects that sort of add a little bit of beauty, but also, like, a little humor. They're not necessities." Nadia interjects: "Paper chicken slippers, though"—which they sell for the drumsticks of your roast chicken—"your life depends on." Nadia adds: "Also, we're not annoying. That's a big thing."

Indeed, Laila's and Nadia's profound good nature, and their authenticity, may

be one of the truest explanations for Gohar World's success. Rocha tells me: "What I admire about them both is that this is so natural to them. It's genuinely their world—from creating installations, to having friends eat supper on the street at their studio"—which they did during the worst of the pandemic—"to producing their products with family. It's all connected and all authentic." Dries Van Noten, whose LA store hosted a Gohar World pop-up shop called House of Gohar last December, has high praise. "It was a close collaboration, and working with Laila, Nadia, and the Gohar World team was a true delight." Gohar World employees are similarly devoted. The florist Miguel mirthfully recalls the Gohar World launch, at Rockefeller Center, last May, for which he hand-sculpted life-size topiaries and adorned them, respectively, with potatoes and turnips, and 2,000 fresh cherries. Studio manager Yukimi, who splits her time between Laila's private art-and-food pursuits and Gohar World, laughed to me about sewing a picnic blanket for a project of Laila's that was over 700 square feet. "It took me and my husband two hours just to fold," she marvels. This also reflects the sisters' own work ethic. They had both flown on a red-eye from Los Angeles the day before our interviews. After cooking us studio lunch, Laila had scoured her own induction burner, twice. Kim Hastreiter, cofounder of *Paper* magazine, who knows Laila better of the two sisters, says bluntly: "Laila works like a dog."

In its first year of life, Gohar World has grown considerably. It launched globally, and has already earned back the sisters' original investment. In addition to its collaboration with Dries Van Noten, Gohar World made a capsule collection for Gucci Vault. The company is designing barware for Marriott's Luxury Collection hotels in Tokyo, Paris, and Los Angeles, and is planning its third Gohar World table collection, for which Nadia will travel to Cairo. I ask whether the company's growth has taken them by surprise. Laila answers: "I'm not really surprised. It's grown in the way that it's grown not by coincidence—but because we grew it. I was satisfied with what I was doing before this. So I thought, If I do this, I want it to be, like, a world." Nadia adds: "I think we're at this point where we're five people

or something. If we had more people, I know it could just, like, combust." (Laila interjects: "Combust is a bad thing. It means explode." Nadia: "I kind of use it in a good way.")

Laila is also pregnant with her first child with Mattos, due in May. I ask if she plans to keep working. "Yes, of course," is her immediate answer. But she adds: "I definitely want to take off some time. But it's good, because that's when things get slower for us." Nadia—who adamantly demurs when I try to pry into her romantic life—disagrees. "Okay, fine, not then, but in August it gets slower." In the meantime, the plan is to expand. So far, Gohar World has been self-funded. "This works when Yasser is making 500 units," says Laila, "but if Yasser needs to make 20,000 units, there needs to be a whole network of people who are led by Yasser." Nadia chimes in: "That's a big future plan. It could even be tomorrow. It's not that far ahead." Laila and Nadia are starting to talk about raising money, which they plan to in 2023. "But I think like everything that we do, we're going to do it in our way. It's not going to be in this, like, techy way," Laila says.

Fundraising poses less of a barrier than the prospect of more time on computer screens. Both Laila and Nadia are devoutly analog, esteeming work done by hand and what Nadia calls "the materiality of things." "I mean we obviously use technology. We're an online business," says Laila. But Nadia has her phone set up to ring as a landline when she's in her apartment. Gohar World also has a no-Zoom policy. There is some irony to this—the company has 43.6K Instagram followers; Laila has 257K—which the sisters acknowledge. "I'm a person living in 2023. I, like, whatever, do the thing. But I just don't want to be staring at the screen all day. And I don't want to be communicating with everyone through a screen. So I'm just gonna figure out how to do it in a different way." As we finish our coffees, Laila recounts leaving their studio the other day and hearing their operations director, Kieran Turner, say the word *Slack*—meaning the group texting app common to the kinds of companies that use terms like *teams* and *one-on-ones* and *all hands on deck*. "Obviously not in reference to us," she says. "I told Kieran, 'Oh, God, I hope we never have to use Slack.' And he said, 'We will.'" Laila

sighs. "I guess, but I hope that we never have to use Slack. And that everybody eats carbs no matter how big we get." □

KING CARLOS

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released. I want to have a great collection—that's my aim, anyway. I have about 20 now."

It seems fairly certain that Alcaraz will amass more than a few pairs of sneakers over the next few years—though how much difference it will make to him is unclear. When I ask about his sponsorships, he has to get out his phone to check, and suddenly remembers that BMW has given him a car.

Ferrero, who began training here himself when he was 15 and lived in the house where Alcaraz now boards, is pleased with his protégé's progress but decidedly untriumphant.

"Those of us who are on the inside like to be a bit more cautious," he says. "I think Carlos has qualities that make him tremendously well placed to be one of the best in history. That's clear to me. But obviously many things can happen. He's young. There are a lot of things he doesn't see. We all know what the risks are: partying, getting distracted, not concentrating on tennis. When you've got the opportunity to meet the rich and famous it's easy to get disoriented. Now a lot of people will tell him that he does everything very well. But those of us around him have to try and see the reality. He's got to get better at everything—consistency, attitude at difficult moments, maturity on the court. We've got to work on his weaknesses."

Alcaraz's family, Ferrero says, "has a very important role to play" in keeping him grounded. The fact that his father knows the world of tennis so well makes a huge difference. Now his brother Álvaro often travels with him (during the US Open they shared a hotel room, just as they'd shared a bunk bed years earlier). The wider team extends from Ferrero (whom Alcaraz calls "Juanki") to a personal trainer, a physical therapist, a doctor, a couple of trainers in Murcia—and, lately, a psychologist called Isabel Balaguer.

"She's helped me a lot," Alcaraz tells me. "I was a bit all over the place. I didn't control my emotions well, I got really pissed off. When I was 15 or 16 I threw my racket around quite a bit, or I'd break one, and that put my game at risk. So I

knew I had to improve in that respect. Thanks to Isabel I've gotten much better. Feeling calm during such a demanding year is essential. And from my point of view, it's crucial to go out onto the court smiling, feeling happy. That helps you mentally. For me, it's everything."

I spend the night in one of the wood cabins at the academy, expecting to watch Alcaraz train again the next day. But in the morning the place looks deserted. Alcaraz and Ferrero are in a huddle with his trainer. "Today we're going to rest," Ferrero announces. Something is up. An intimation of injury, perhaps.

Two days later, Alcaraz's Twitter account bears the news: a chance movement during training has damaged a muscle in his right thigh. He is pulling out of the Australian Open.

"You know your own body best," he'd told me. "I know where my limits are—when I need to stop, when I need to push myself. I've learned how to do that. It's better to stop in time to recover as quickly as possible. Stopping in time is also a victory."

I'd asked Alcaraz what had been his most difficult hour so far. "I had a bad period after I won the US Open," he replied. "That sounds like I'm making it up, but...well, I enjoyed that moment a lot." (The night of his victory he celebrated with his family and his team at Mission Ceviche, a Peruvian restaurant on the Upper East Side, and the victory party was followed by a photo-op with his trophy in Times Square in the early hours of the morning.)

"But the truth is, when I had to go back into competition, there was a point when I went: 'Stress! You know?' He held his head in his hands to illustrate the point. "Maybe I hadn't fully taken on board what had happened. Or maybe, instinctively, I lost a little hope. I think what happened was, when I saw that I'd achieved what I'd dreamed of since I was a little kid, unconsciously that aspiration dimmed a bit. And that was hard. Because no one was enjoying it—I wasn't, on the court; Juanki wasn't, seeing me so shut down and lacking in spark. I thought, Where do I go now?"

As hard as it is to get to number one, it's much harder to stay there. "What Rafa, Roger, and Djokovic have done is almost impossible," Alcaraz said—not merely

winning but continuing to want to win. "I think when you've won your first Grand Slam you realize how complicated that is."

So what will he do?

"I'm going to keep wanting to make my dream come true," he said, "even though I already have." □

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

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that often treats patients troubled by mental health issues and/or anxiety disorders related to "maladaptive perfectionism." "It comes down to: How do you cope with disappointment, setback, and failure? Those experiences are part of every life—even the most outwardly successful."

Braunstein counsels his patients to try to stop thinking of life as "an endless report card" and simply "let themselves be." Easy advice to hear, harder to take. We've been conditioned to think in these terms, of course, thanks in no small part to a multibillion-dollar wellness/self-help industry premised on the toxic promise that perfection is in reach, that it's merely a matter of consuming the correct suite of enhancing products and services and never, ever missing a workout or letting your positive mindset drift to a doubt-inducing thought.

Does anyone actually live this way? Should anyone? Miuccia Prada answers with a resounding *no*, explaining that her entire project as a designer has been to "bring the 'bad' in order to bring life into clothes." The Prada spring/summer 2023 collection is especially forceful in making this point: As Prada commented in the show notes, its creases, stains, splotchy ombré, and exposed slips are there to express "traces of living," i.e., the inevitable blemishes that the filter—and, often, the fashion industry—prefers to scrub out. "There is this fake idea of perfection that I have always hated," Prada notes. "What I've done in my career so far is about introducing 'the real'—more imperfection." What I love about this conceit and the way Prada and her co-designer, Raf Simons, execute it is that it embraces the human instinct to make the most of oneself—this is not the wardrobe of a woman who has succumbed to a life in sweatpants—while also ennobling the missteps that accrue in the attempt. And this, I suspect, is the new frontier in wellness—think, tentatively mapped by

entrepreneurs like Danielle Duboise and Whitney Tingle of Sakara Life.

"Striving for perfection is just an invitation to failure," says Tingle, explaining the genesis of the Sakara nutrition program Eat Clean, Play Dirty, which explicitly gives customers permission to screw up. "We prefer to think in terms of *balance*," Tingle goes on, pointing out that the word is often construed as referring to a permanent state of grace, as opposed to an ongoing effort to attain equilibrium. "Sometimes balance means eating healthy food, and sometimes it means going out with friends and having fries and wine and laughing. It's about being present in this moment, now, so there's less anxiety about becoming who we want to be tomorrow."

This idea is echoed by Doing Well's Daphne Javitch, who—full disclosure—is one of my best friends, as well as a health coach offering guidance to private clients and subscribers to her online platform. I've long joked that Javitch is my "malnutritionist," because our favorite way to spend time together is over, yes, fries and wine. Cheat nights, you might say. But, like Tingle and Duboise, Javitch says: Permission to "cheat" is the point.

"I'm always telling people: You don't have to join the wellness witness protection program," she says. "There's no prize for doing everything perfectly all the time. The success is in accepting, Okay—you are where you are, and maybe that's two steps back from yesterday, but stuff happens, so be gentle with yourself and move forward."

These wellness-oriented conversations brought me back to the one I'd had with Risso, discussing the "unfinishedness" of his Marni collection. Seemingly as an aside, he mentioned that a few years ago he'd taken up the cello. "I was a novice, you know, and it went very slow—you can't just click a button and be excellent," Risso recalls. "And then little by little, you start to hear these wonderful sounds. Still not perfect, but—*music*."

Risso got serious about his cello playing during the early lockdown days of the pandemic. Many of us embarked on new hobbies at that time—learning to cook, learning a new language, learning to sew. Grounding practices, in that there's no skipping ahead—the fulfillment is in the doing, the application of care. Risso connects his anecdote about studying cello to the emphasis on hand craft in his

collection: He wanted to draw people's attention to the tender labors that had brought his apparel into being. Van Noten, likewise, structured his catwalk outing to make a similar point, disentangling formal elements by showcasing first shape, via his all-black looks, then color, then print. His foregrounding of humble materials, like a sport mesh typically used inside garments, to sculpt them, was also intended to lay process out and pay it homage.

But perhaps no show this season engaged this theme as directly as Erdem Moralioglu's. The timing of his *défilé* was so apt, coming the day before Queen Elizabeth II's funeral and amid political and economic mayhem almost unprecedented in modern British history, that it's easy to forget Moralioglu planted the seeds of his collection long before his nation began to come so noticeably apart at the seams. What a moment, then, for a story of mending.

"It started out really abstract—thinking about decay, and the human desire to restore," Moralioglu recalls of the impetus behind his collection. A very post-pandemic jumping-off point, I guessed, but Moralioglu shrugged his shoulders at this suggestion. "As a designer, you're always tapping into undercurrents—or you

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should be,” he says, before launching into an enthusiastic retelling of his experiences in the conservation back rooms of London’s V&A and National Gallery, where he put flesh on the bones of his SS23 concept by watching restorers bring Old Master canvases back to life. Their painstaking efforts fused fine-brush artisanship with high technology, deep archival research, and no little imagination.

“One painting, a corner of it was totally destroyed, and it was fascinating to see this conservationist, like, feeling his way through the repair,” Moralioglu explains. “Or to look at ancient Roman glass vessels that were being put together out of fragments, and when you got up close, you could see all the chips and the cracks.... I suppose that was the emotional trigger for this collection,” he continues. “I wanted to capture that sense of being in the middle of an exploration into how to take something broken and make it whole.” (See Erdem coat on page 229.)

It’s funny that an erstwhile gothic theme—decay—could result in a collection so thrillingly alive. That’s a quality shared by all these “unfinished” fashion outings: They thrum with in-the-moment-ness, of not knowing where your next step will

take you. That feeling of uncertainty—and possibility!—is what differentiates a person from a product, and reality from fantasy. And in reality, we are all buffeted by forces beyond our control.

“One thing the pandemic showed us is that we were living in a kind of dream,” says Van Noten. “That we could do everything, have everything. And then...everything stopped.” We were made to inhabit our time differently, and to re-reckon our values, he goes on to note, and awaken to the understanding that the way we led our lives was premised on unstable structures.

“It’s absurd to think we could snap our fingers and go back to ‘normal’ after that, because now we ask, What *was* normal?” Van Noten continues. “This was very much on my mind as I considered returning to the runway, and what type of collection I wanted to show. I felt it would be tragic not to convey that the way I view the world, and my place in it, has changed. And I wanted to design clothing for people who were also thinking along these lines.”

That refusal to pretend that everything is perfect when it’s not—not yet, not ever—explains why I feel, in a strange way, *understood* by Van Noten’s clothes. And Risso’s, and Moralioglu’s, and those from

numerous other jagged, ragged SS23 collections. They acknowledge that life is but a series of passing moments, a fluctuation of travail and renewal, and that we’re all in some way, like Erdem’s restorers, continually reweaving the loose threads of our existence to create something not perfect, no, but in its own way sublime.

“We need to reorient our concept of ‘perfection’ away from what we think we’re supposed to be—which is usually what society is saying we have to be to fit in, or get ahead—and start thinking, What’s perfect for me, right now, in this moment?” says Taryn Toomey, founder of fitness studio The Class. Like Javitch and Sakara’s Duboise and Tingle, Toomey is fostering a more compassionate approach to self-improvement: While the classes in her program can be done in a very high-intensity way, the instructors always offer mellow modifications and encourage clients to take them; the “win” in The Class is to understand your own needs. “Some days you want to do a million jumping jacks and get that stuck energy moving,” Toomey says, “and some days you have to stay grounded. We’re human beings—we’re not static, and the story’s going to keep changing.” □

KING CARLOS

201: Jacket; tomford.com. T-shirt from Atm Anthony Thomas Melillo; atmcollection.com.
202: Jacket and pants; Hermès boutiques. Hoodie; guestinresidence.com. J.M. Weston boots; eu.jmweston.com.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

208: Re/Done tank top.
211: Sandals; therow.com.

Manicurist: Tom Bachik. Tailor: Hailey Desjardins.

TWO OF A KIND

212: Bag; victoria beckham.com. Rings; driesvannoten.com.
213: Bag; jilsander.com.
214: Beanies; fendi.com.
215: On Moss; sandals; gucci.com. On Jones; mule; loewe.com. Dries Van Noten ring; driesvannoten.com.
217: Earrings; tomford.com.
218: On Moss; bag;

dolcegabbana.com. On Jones; earrings; tomford.com. Manicurist: Elle Gerstein using Chanel Le Vernis. Tailor: Cassady Rose Bonjo.

JUST ONE THING

220: Hat; theattico.com.
222: Erdem dress; erdem.com.
224: Brooches; vancleefarpels.com.
225: The Attico boots; theattico.com.
226: Boots; theattico.com. Chanel necklace; select

Chanel boutiques. **227:** Tie; anderson-sheppard.co.uk for information. Manicurist: Tom Bachik. Tailor: Hailey Desjardins.

THE GET

228-229: **1.** Dress, price upon request. **4.** Coat, \$6,410. **6.** Bag, \$2,595. **7.** Watch, \$8,000. **8.** Coat, price upon request.

LAST LOOK

236: Clutch; Gucci Salon Beverly Hills.

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Last Look



Gucci clutch

The runway at Gucci's doubly chic Twinsburg show—Alessandro Michele's last with the label—featured twins dressed identically, each carrying an identical iteration of this statement-making bag. A clutch of beige satin embroidered with neat rows of pearls, the accessory is adorned with a removable strap—with its own fringe of aquatic blue pearls—and appears like a treasure unearthed from the sea. One could very well say it's so nice that it had to be shown twice.

PHOTOGRAPHED BY NAILA RUECHEL



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